DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 184 131 CS 205 441

TITLE	Competency Testing and Beyond: Improving Student Writing. Conference Presentation (Albany, New York, May 24-25, 1979).
INSTITUTION	New York State Education Dept., Albany. Bureau of English Education.
PUB DATE	May 79
NOTE	128p.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; Learning Activities; *Minimum Competency Testing; Parent Role; *Student Improvement; Teacher Role; Teaching Methods; *Writing (Composition); *Writing Instruction; *Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS	*Composition Process

ABSTRACT

This booklet contains selected proceedings of the 1979 conference entitled "Competency Testing and Beyond: Improving Student Writing" held in Albany, New York. Topics covered in the 17 selections are: the "real" world and the teaching of English, what has been learned about competency testing in writing, the composing process, diagnosing student writing, effective teaching of composition, the Capital District Writing Project in Albany, teaching sentence structure without grammar, using choral reading to practice composition skills, operating a writing skills laboratory on a low or no budget, parental involvement and the writing skills of secondary school students, approaches to the teaching of composition in the elementary school, suggestions for motivating students to write, teacher intervention during the composing process, competency testing controversies, and writing today and tomorrow. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED184131

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Conference Presentations from

Competency Testing and Beyond: Improving Student Writing

May 24—25, 1979
State University of New York—Albany

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

New York State Education Dept.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Sponsored by:
The University of the State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
The Bureau of English Education
Albany, New York 12234

MAR 3 1 1980

CS205441

Conference Chairperson:	Sheila A. Schlawin Associate in English Education
Coordinator of Regents Competency Test in Writing:	Charles R. Chew Chief of the Bureau of English Education
Conference Exhibit Chairperson:	James Crabtree Associate in English Education
Chairperson of Student Writing Exhibit:	Jerome Flax Associate in English Education
Coordinator of Conference Workshops on Rating:	Phyllis Ross Associate in English Education

FOREWORD

Since so many people who attended the May 24-25, 1979 Conference, Competency Testing and Beyond: Improving Student Writing, found the presentations valuable, we are making copies, or in some cases, summaries, of the presentations available to all the teachers in New York State.

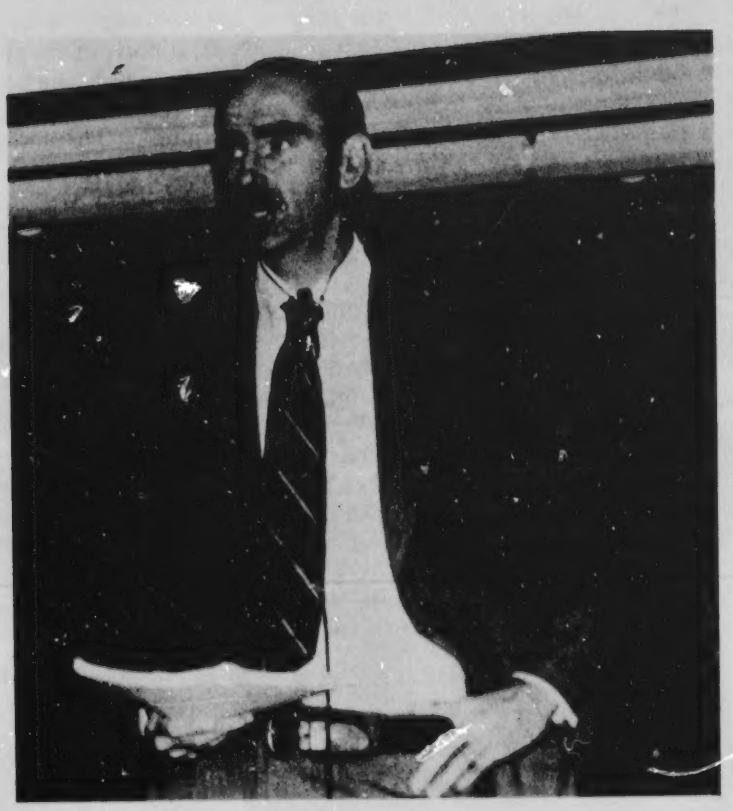
The fact that so many attended the conference and found it valuable is a tribute to the professionalism of the people who attended as well as to the high quality of the presentations.

Sheila A. Schlawin

Sheila A. Schlawin
Conference Chairperson
Associate in English Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Lee Odell	The "Real" World and the Teaching of English	2
Charles R. Chew	The Competency Test in Writing: What We Have Learned	17
Richard L. Larson	Some Propositions About the Process of Composing	22
Charles R. Cooper and Ann Matsuhashi	Diagnosing Student Writing	32
Cecelia M. Kingston	Writing: To Assign is Not to Teach	34
Doris M. Quick	An Overview of the Capital District Writing Project	44
Lynn Q. Troyka	Teaching Sentence Structure Without Grammar	47
William H. Cullen	Using Choral Reading to Practice Composition Skills	57
Susan L. Steiner	Operating a Writing Skills Labroatory on a Low-or-No-Budget	61
Marlene Caroselli	The Effect of Parental Involvement on Writing Skills of Secondary Students	63
Nedra Stimpfle	Approaches for Teaching Composition in the Elementary School	69
Patricia Fritschler	Writing: The Big Turn On	79
Robert Warde	Writing: The Big Turn On	90
Phyllis Bellofatto	Writing: The Big Turn On	93
Denise L. David	Helpful Teacher Intervention During the Composing Process	101
Robert Squires	Competency Testing Controversies	107
John C. Maxwell	Writing Today and Tomorrow	118



Lee Odell

The "Real" World and the Teaching of English

Lee Odell
Professor of English
State University of New York at Albany

The focus of our meetings today and tomorrow is the teaching and evaluation of writing. Workshops scheduled throughout both days will deal extensively with these two topics. And later in this talk I will be concerned with the teaching of writing. But I want to begin not with teaching and evaluation but with writers and writing. My assumption is that what we teach students to do should be informed by what writers actually do when they write. This would seem to be only common sense. And indeed many teachers and researchers take just this approach. But this is not always the case. To choose an example that should embarrass only me, there was a time when I tried to get my high school students to understand the relative merits of "loose" and "periodic" sentences. The periodic sentence, with its concessive and subordinate elements located at the beginning of the sentence, implied that the writer knew exactly what he or she wanted to say. The "loose" sentence, with its subordinate clauses and phrases tacked on at the end of the main clause, implied a lack of forethought. And besides, loose sentences were, well, loose. Basing my teaching on a composition text I greatly admired, I assured my students that "good" writers avoided loose sentences and used periodic sentences wherever possible. But when Francis Christensen looked at actual writing, rather than the precepts of composition tests, he discovered that very fine writers do indeed use loose sentences, which Christensen tactfully re-named "cumulative sentences." In this reference to Christensen's work, I do not mean to suggest that one should not write periodic sentences. Indeed, by placing our sentence modifers at the beginning of our sentences, by making our reader wait a bit to discover the main point of our assertion, we give emphasis to our ideas. I do want to argue, though, that our claims about "good" writing and our teaching of writing must be informed by the practice of people whose livelihood depends, completely or in part, on their ability to express themselves in writing. It is the work of these writers that constitutes the "real world" that can influence our efforts to teach writing.

Granted, the practices of some writers do not apply to the classroom. To give just two innocuous examples: The poet Goethe reportedly liked to keep a rotting apple on his desk; apparently he derived some sort of inspiration from the scent. Another poet liked to do his writing after he had had a leisurely lunch followed by a couple of beers. But I am not talking about poets. I'm talking about people who, day in and day out, have to write with reasonable skill in order to maintain and succeed in their jobs. We can learn from these people. And we can use what we learn as we try to decide how we might go about helping students improve their writing.

This morning I want to look at some of the writing a few people have had to do as they go about their jobs. For the most part I shall talk about writing done in a particular insurance company. I shall try, however, to use writing samples and to draw conclusions that are compatible with the writing I am currently studying in a government bureaucracy. (Incidentally, neither the bureaucracy nor the insurance agency is located in Albany.) Obviously, I cannot generalize about all writing done in business and government. But the information we do have now seems very useful and very encouraging to English teachers. After we examine some of this writing, I shall suggest ways our understanding of this writing might influence our teaching of writing.

Even in suggesting that business and government writing might influence our work with students, I am aware of two very serious objections to what I shall say. The first may reflect our most fundamental assumptions about what we English teachers hope to accomplish through

our teaching. We are interested in educating our students, enabling them to read and write and think with some skill and sensitivity. We are not interested in simply training students, preparing them to meet the narrowly defined demands of a specific job. This concern is so important that I want to acknowledge it at the very outset and to promise to return to it at the conclusion of my talk. A second, more practical objection is that writing done in business and government may not seem a very promising place to look for help in devising a writing program. It is now popular and, apparently, quite profitable to lament the wretched quality of writing done in business and government. Edwin Newman, for example, surely has done rather well by writing books and making television appearances in which he delights and horrifies us with examples of inept or deceitful writing. And a casual look at writing done in business and government may seem to confirm our worst suspicions. Consider, for example, the three pieces of writing on the first page of the handouts you have been given. The first was done by a bookkeeper in an insurance company; the bookeeper has written a memo to an agent, explaining why the agent had received less commission than he had expected.

> When we have a lapse, cancellation or NSF less than 6 months in force we reverse those contracts off advances. If one pays six months only and lapses we do not. Therefore, the three months advanced over a six month lapse sort of equals out the ones which pay any premium at all then cancel, lapse or NSF and we charge back.

Granted, this is only an excerpt, but the rest of the letter does not clarify any of this. For example, nothing in the rest of the letter would let me figure out what happens when "three months are advanced over a six month lapse." We may guess that, in this context, NSF means non-sufficient funds. But I was a little perplexed to find NSF used as a verb, as it apparently is in the phrase "cancel, lapse or NSF."

Another troublesome piece of writing comes from the insurance company where the bookkeeper worked. Apparently, one way insurance companies make money is, in effect, to lend money to banks. Banks in turn lend this money to their customers. When the banks' customers repay the loans, a large chunk of principal and interest is passed back to the insurance company. The following letter confirms an insurance company's willingness to make one of these loans to a bank.

> Re: Mortgage Loan No. _____
>
> Dear _____:
>
> This letter will serve as our commitment for our participation in the above mortgage loan. It is our understanding that this loan is to be for $185.00, with our participation to be 90% or $165.00 for 10 years to net us 9¾% interest.
>
> Sincerely yours,

The person who showed me this letter had in his file other letters almost exactly like this one. Some of the details varied from letter to letter. But otherwise, writing these letters was simply a matter of using a standard form and filling in certain blanks to suit the occasion: "This loan is in the amount of _____ to be paid back over a period of _____ at an interest rate of _____ percent." One could program a computer to "compose" such a letter.

The third piece of writing appeared on the cover of a catalogue distributed by a company that publishes a widely used series of standardized tests.

> The prices listed herein conform with the provisions of the Executive Order stablizing prices, wages, and rents announced on August 15, 1971, and subsequent implementing orders and directives. Planned price adjustments for 1971 have been temporarily suspended.

This was not written by a computer, but it might as well have been. It has all the warmth of an anonymous voice coming over a public address system. The passage is lifeless and abstract, and it obscures as much information as it conveys. For example, the phrase price adjustments allows the possibility of price decreases as well as increases. But I doubt that "planned price adjustments" included substantial reduction in prices.

At first glance these pieces of writing might appear to confirm our worst suspicions about writing that is done in business and government. This writing may entail a highly specialized use of language that is intelligible only to a very limited audience. It may require little more than the mindless use of a formula. It may suffer from a bland impersonality of style. Or it may exhibit all of these qualities simultaneously.

I have dwelled on these three pieces of writing because I do not want to oversimplify or to ignore problems that exist. Yet in the remainder of this talk I want to suggest that the picture is not quite so bleak as it may seem. We have some reason to think that this writing is rich and complex and that our understanding of it may help us see what we need to do in order to improve our own teaching of writing.

To illustrate this point, I want us to look closely at several pieces of writing done at the insurance company I mentioned earlier. I obtained these pieces of writing simply by asking workers at the insurance company to save a copy of everything they wrote for a two week period. In the handouts, you have several examples of this writing. As we go through these pieces of writing, I will ask you to do two things. First I want you to think about the choices each writer makes; that is, look for the places where you suspect that the writer apparently made some decision as to what he or she would say or how to say it. The second thing I will ask you to do is consider what these decisions tell you about the writer's purpose and the writer's relation to his or her audience.

The first piece of writing consists of two notes -- one printed, one in long hand -- written on a statement of an account submitted by an insurance agent. As you will see at the places that have been circled, the agent who submitted the statement made two mistakes: he forgot to fill in the date of the statement and he entered a total in the wrong place. The handwritten and printed messages, addressed to Fred, are telling the agent of the error of his ways.

(See page 6)

In these notes to the agent, the writer has made a number of choices. For one thing, the writer chose not to ignore the agent's mistake and chose to address the agent personally rather than write a general memo to all agents concerning the importance of filling out statements correctly. Further, the writer chose simply to scrawl a note on the account sheet rather than write a separate memo or letter. And the writer chose not to issue a direct command or instruction. In place of writing "Please put the agent's total on the bottom" or "You should put the agent's total on the bottom of the page, she wrote, "Fred, if you put the agent's total on the bottom of the page, I'll have more room to holler and yell." Finally, the writer chose to express the request in rather informal language.

You may have noticed other choices, but just these few give us a certain amount of information. These choices suggest that the writer has enough authority to insist on a

particular way of doing things yet does not want to sound too bossy, too authoritarian. The writer seeks, rather, to maintain a casual, good-natured relation with the reader while trying to make sure that, in the future, the reader follows a specific set of procedures.

The choices in this first piece of writing -- and the implications of those choices --may seem clearer when we contrast them with choices found in other pieces of writing done at the insurance company. Consider the following memo to a Mr. Wilson.

> Hi, Mr. Wilson, just fill in the authorization and send in the complete card in the enclosed envelope.
>
> The premium is due December 10th, you may want to send one check on the new account dated December 10 since we are sometimes a little time preparing drafts when there is a change.
>
> Thank you for writing.

As in the note to "Fred", the writer is trying to influence the reader's actions; in this case the writer wants the reader to fill out some sort of authorization form and send in a check. Yet here, the writer is a litttle more polite; the speaker-audience relation is a little more formal. The writer appears to presume less on the knowledge and good will of the reader. This reader apparently rates something more than a scribbled note; also, this reader is addressed as Mr., and the writer avoids colloquial terms such as holler and guys (although the writer does choose a surprisingly casual form of greeting). By contrast with the previous letter, the writer of this letter has no power to insist that "Mr. Wilson" follow a particular course of action. Thus one of the requests is phrased very tentatively ("you may want to send . . . a check . . . " rather than "Please send a check . . ."), and the other request is made in a rather offhand manner. In the phrase "just fill in the . . . form," the word just implies that the decision is not terribly difficult or time-consuming. Further, this writer assumes that, compared to the reader of the first letter, the reader has little knowledge about the insurance business. Consequently, the writer chooses to include some background information about the time involved in preparing drafts and uses few words that have a very specialized meaning.

The third piece of writing, obviously a form letter, was typed on bond stationery which bore the insurance company's letterhead. As we read this letter, would you, again, think about the writer's choices and the implications of those choices.

> Your bank has returned your premium payment described above for Non-Sufficient Funds the second time and it cannot be redeposited.
>
> Your insurance coverage is now no longer in effect and cannot provide protection to your beneficiaries nor build benefits for yourself as originally intended. If you wish to reinstate this coverage, we must have a cashier's check or money order in the amount of the payment, which has been returned from your bank.
>
> If the payment is more costly than you feel you wish to have deducted from your account each month, you may contact us or your representative and it could be changed to a more convenient amount in most cases.
>
> If you have any questions, we would appreciate hearing from you. An envelope is provided for your convenience in corresponding or for returning your cashier's check or money order.
>
> Yours very truly,

State Bank [illegible] Kansas AGENT: [illegible]

Week Ending Saturday 197 [illegible]

APPLICANT	AGE	KIND OF POLICY	INITIAL PREMIUM	FILE AGENT	OWNER / AGENT
	60	SM	10.00	3150	Self
6	60	SM	10.00	3150	Self
+	46	SM	15.00	4725	Self → FRED I
	23	SM	10.00	3150	Self
	64	SM	10.00	3150	Self only a 110 WISS
	54	SM	10.00	3150	self only To m ISS
	61	SM	15.00	4725	guys. two Dates
	67	SM	15.00	4725	
	UFT		5.00	15.00	1/2 of CA DeMoss (in Full)
				199.25	
	DEDUCT		10.00	31.50	PARTIAL ON PONDER

Fred, if you put the agents total on the bottom of the page, I'll have more room to holler + yell.

Fred [illegible]
Gary [illegible]
Bill [illegible]
John [illegible]
Mel [illegible]

As do the first two pieces of writing, this letter attempts to influence the reader's actions. Evidently, the insurance company would prefer to have the customer's policy remain in force and to continue to receive the customer's premium payments. Yet the speaker-audience relationship in this letter is comparatively formal, without being cold or critical. When this letter is sent out, we may be sure that all the conventions of good business letter writing will be observed. The reader will be addressed "Dear Mr." (or "Dear Miss/Ms.") rather than "Hi, Mr. _____," and there will be a colon after the reader's name, not a comma, as was the case in the memo to Mr. Wilson.

In addition to these choices pertaining to the form of the letter, I particularly want to note some of the choices regarding sentence structure and content. The first sentence seems a bit awkward to me; it would read more smoothly if it were rearranged thus: "Your bank has, for the second time, returned your premium payment because of non-sufficient funds. Your check cannot be redeposited." Yet despite this awkwardness, the writer has used syntax effectively in several places. Notice the grammatical subjects of the first, second and third sentences of the letter: the writer begins by saying "Your bank has returned your premium payment . . ." and goes on to say "Your insurance coverage is no longer in effect . . ." In each case, the writer avoids focusing on the customer and his/her misdeeds. That is, the writer does not say "You have given us a bad check" or "you have caused your insurance coverage to lapse." Consequently, the writer avoids the appearance of attacking or criticizing the customer. Further, the request for payment focuses on the insurance agency ("We must have your cashier's check . . .") and thus avoids issuing a command ("You must send us a cashier's check."). In addition to these choices of sentence structure, the writer also chooses to provide the reader with an alternative to allowing the insurance coverage to lapse and also provides the reader with a convenient way to respond to the letter.

I have asked you to consider this particular set of writings because all of them were written by the same person -- a bookkeeper in the insurance company. My point, obviously, is this: Many people in business and government have to do much more writing than one might expect. And that writing may require them to do much more than observe the conventions of, say, addressing a business letter. They have to make reasonable choices about

1. The form their writing may take (Will a neatly-typed letter be too time-consuming and formal? Will a scribbled message seem too casual or will it strike just the right note of informality?);

2. The language they will use (How much technical language is the reader likely to understand? Would it be a good idea to be a bit chatty and friendly?);

3. The structure of their sentences;

4. The amount and kind of information they must include.

From my work in an insurance company and in a government bureaucracy -- and from colleagues' work in a labor union and in a bank -- I feel reasonably confident about saying many non-academic writers must make at least these kinds of choices. Some of these choices are made without much deliberation; for an experienced writer, some choices may be almost instinctive. Yet many of these choices reflect considerable astuteness. To examine the reasoning that underlies some of these choices, I'll ask you to consider two letters written by the president of the insurance company where our bookkeeper works.

The first letter is addressed to a man who had contracted to move the insurance executive's house. For some months, the house mover had procrastinated -- the weather was

too bad, he had too many prior commitments, and so on. At one point the housemover had brought some of his equipment to the work site but then had removed it without any explanation. It was at this point that the executive wrote the following letter. As you will see, I have highlighted some of the choices reflected in this letter by posing alternatives that the executive might have considered.

Mr. Art Johnson
Kadoka
South Dakota 57435

Dear (Art:)
(Mr. Johnson:)

(I note that)
(It has come to my attention that) you have removed your equipment from the house. This concerns me since it would indicate you're on another job.

(You must move the house)
(I expect the house to be moved) at the
(It is my expectation that the house will be moved)

earliest date. I just will not go along with any delay not directly attributable to the weather.

(If you do not begin work within the next week, you may expect my attorney to bring suit to recover the $4,000 I have paid you.)

(end letter with paragraph 2; do not make threat explicit.)

To provide you a bit of context for the letter, here are some of the executive's comments about the house mover:

> "Well, when you talk to him, he's an outgoing type of fellow, but he has the reputation of promising and not delivering. The problem was that the reliable mover in town wanted $12,000 to move the house and Art would move it for $8,000. And so I knew I'd have to put up with something, but how much I didn't know. I suppose, looking backward, I'd still have him move it. There's been delay, but for $4,000 . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> I've accepted the delay. Actually, I like the guy, and we'll be friends when it's all over. And ultimately the house will be moved. He's not going to hold it against me for being tough, and I won't hold it against him when we finally get it moved."

With this contest in mind, would you look back at the alternatives I indicated on the letter and think about which ones you might expect the executive to choose.

Now that you have had a moment to consider these alternatives, here are the executive's choices and some of the reasoning that underlay them.

1. The executive chose "Dear Art", because:

"There are some people you call Mister and some you call by their first name. I can tell very quickly what the relationship is."

2. The executive chose "I note that.", because:

"The alternative is not accurate; it implies someone else told me. I want him to know that I personally saw what the situation was."

3. The writer chose, "I expect the house to be moved.", because:

The first was "too abrupt, too peremptory." The third was "too soft." The second, he felt, made it clear that "I am not accepting anything else."

4. The writer chose not to spell out the implications because:

"He's an intelligent person -- cunning, shrewd . . . why use a hammer when you can use a gloved fist . . . I expect he knows what I mean."

For purposes of contrast, there is another letter by the same writer. In this letter, he is telling an out-of-town agent that he is fired. The executive had tried to met with the agent, but bad weather had made the meeting impossible. Before you read the letter, here is some background information.

"Barry Jones is a man that we hired to direct our insurance program in Montana. We were getting very good results in Montana, and we were giving the credit to Barry; we thought he was doing a good job.

In the interim, however, it became apparent that Barry was not the one who was responsible for getting the job done -- It was Joe Williams. We discovered that Barry Jones was up at Sommers (North Dakota) and that he didn't go out on the road at all . . . We concluded that he was not a manager at all and as a matter of fact -- even worse than that --he wasn't a person we could communicate with. We would call him and he wouldn't return our telephone calls. He seemed to only answer our calls when it was convenient for him."

With this in mind, again consider the writer's alternatives and possible reasons for choosing a given alternative.

Mr. Barry Jones
P.O. Box 123
Somers, Montana 59932

Dear (Barry:)
(Mr. Jones:)

- delete? (As you know, the weather would not permit me to be in Billings.)
(Sorry I couldn't make it.)

(It is now apparent)
(I now see) that for the best interest of

you and the company that our relationship be terminated. You need to become involved in something which will yield sufficient income, and the company needs an agency manager who will give full time to the job.

Accordingly, (you are hereby terminated) / (I am hereby terminating you) as

Sales Coordinator, effective immediately.

You will, of course, receive whatever compensation is due you on business already produced. In addition, if your agent still has some calls, you may continue to receive any override due you up until February 1, 1978.

- delete this paragraph; end letter with ". . . effectively immediately."

As before, here are the insurance executive's choices and the reasons he gave for making those choices.

1. Surprisingly, the writer chose "Dear Barry", because:

   "I still know him that well."

2. The writer chose to include the introductory paragraph about the weather preventing his meeting with the agent because:

   "I have a habit of wanting to lead in to what I want to talk about."

   This "lead-in" seemed especially important in this letter since the executive said he prefers to convey bad news in a face-to-face conversation. This lead-in serves, in part, to justify the writer's departure from his normal practice.

3. The executive chose "It is now apparent" because the phrase "implies that I am taking everything into account"

4. The writer chose "You are hereby terminated."

5. The executive chose to spell out the implications of this letter; He wanted the agent to have "no chance to misinterpret what I mean since I represent the company."

One conclusion I want to illustrate with these two letters is that the writing this executive does is not governed by straightforward rules that say always do this or never do that. At some points, he deliberately uses the pronoun "I", at other points he deliberately avoids it. In the first letter, he does not mention the implication of his statements. Yet in the second letter, he carefully spells them out so that there can be no possible misunderstanding. In different contexts, he makes different choices. Even more important, in different contexts, he uses different reasons to justify his choices. In commenting on the first letter, the insurance executive frequently explained his choices by referring either to his intended audience or to the effect he wished to have on that audience. In the second letter, the executive made fewer references to his audience and, instead, referred to the image he wished to convey as spokesman for the company.

As I noted earlier in my talk, we cannot generalize about all writing done in business and government. But I think we have enough information to make reasonable, if still tentative conclusions. The first of these is only implicit in the materials I have discussed this morning, but as I listen to my tapes of interviews with writers, I am constantly reminded that all their writing exists in a context -- or several contexts. Never are they simply given a topic and told to produce some writing on that topic. Before they write, they may have interviewed someone, chatted with a client or a co-worker, or looked up some information in a file. At the

very least, they approach a topic with some understanding of the policy of their organization. They never start cold. Further, they usually have some sense of audience and purpose. Even if writing to an anonymous audience addressed only as "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam", the writers I have interviewed are aware of the need to provide their audience with the explicit background information that will enable them, for example, to provide the material the writer is requesting. Furthermore, some writers have to address multiple audiences for rather complex purposes. For instance, one administrator recently showed me a memo that, ostensibly, was to inform his superior about the work of the administrator's office. I pointed out that much of that information was already known to the writer's supervisor. The writer agreed but told me there was a chance that his supervisor might pass the memo on to a personnel committee as a justification for hiring another worker in the writer's office. The writer did not have the authority to say to his boss, "Look. Pass this along to the Personnel Committee and see if we can't get some more help in my office." But on the chance that the supervisor might decide to do this, the administrator had included information that could serve to persuade a personnel committee as well as to report to his boss.

The second conclusion, one that I have emphasized in my earlier discussions, is that writing in business and government entails a number of different kinds of choices -- choices as to 1) the form writing will take; 2) the formality and technicality of language; 3) the structure of sentences; 4) the kind of information one will include (and leave out); 5) the sources one will draw upon; 6) even, in some cases, the way one signs one's name. As an extreme example of this last point, I know one fairly high-ranking adminstrator in a government agency who signs some of her correspondence "J. Smith" rather than "Jane Smith." She says she does so because she feels some of the people she writes to may not give quite as much weight to a message that they know comes from a woman. Although an extreme case, this last example leads me to a corollary of my second point: Many of the choices writers make are based on their sense of audience and the purpose for which they are writing. In other words many of their choices cannot be explained by simple rules such as always use I; never try to be humorous or casual; always spell out the implications of your statements.

Curiously enough, even the writing with which we began supports the points I am making here. The first piece began "When we have a lapse, cancellation of NSF less than 6 months in force we reverse those contracts off advances." The interesting thing about this passage is that it was written by the same person who wrote the note to "Fred," the memo to "Mr. Wilson" and the form letter that begins: "Your bank has returned your premium payment . . ." In other words, the style in this passage was just one style in the writer's repertoire. Moreover, it made sense because she was writing to a fairly knowledgeable audience. The letter confirming a loan to a bank ("This letter will serve as our commitment . . .") was, indeed, a form letter. But it is rare, in my experience, to find someone who writes only form letters. Finally, even the announcement about "planned price adjustments" reflects some interesting and, I think, appropriate choices. Here again is the announcement:

> The prices listed herein conform with the provisions of the Executive Order stabilizing prices, wages, and rents announced on August 15, 1971, and subsequent implementing orders and directives. Planned price adjustments for 1971 have been temporarily suspended.

I do not admire this impersonal style of writing, but I can appreciate some of the choices the writer has made when I consider an alternative way the passage might have been written:

> We'd planned to raise our prices for next year, but we can't. At least not right now. The feds won't let us. So the prices of things listed in this brochure go along with the executive order issued a while back that puts a lid on prices and so forth. Maybe you should try to take advantage of the situation and place your orders now for materials you'll need for next year.

Before commenting on these passages, I would like to go on to two more passages. The first is an announcement that a college professor distributed to students who were going on a field trip to an art museum in Chicago.

> Trippers will meet at 7:15 (Kalamazoo time) in front of the Union. The bus will leave promptly at 7:30 a.m. There will be no watering stops between Kalamazoo and Chicago, so I strongly recommend that you all eat something vaguely resembling breakfast before we start -something substantial and comforting like a Hershey bar . . . After lunch everyone is on his own in the museum. Museum fatigue is a very real phenomenon and I caution you to use some restraint in your viewing, taking the 20th century first and whatever else you can manage after that. (cited in Macrorie, 1970)

The second passage is my revision of this announcement, which I tried to write in the style of the announcement about "planned price adjustments."

> Participation in the proposed tour of the Chicago museum of art is contingent upon participants' arriving at the Western Michigan State University Union prior to the scheduled departure time of 7:15 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time). Participants should be advised that there will be no stops between the point of departure and the scheduled arrival in Chicago. It is recommended, therefore, that participants make adequate preparation for the journey.

I assume we can agree that neither of my revisions is an adequate substitute for the original. The college professor apparently wanted to convey some information and also give some advice -- no mean trick when dealing with college students. Consequently, the teacher needed to be as engaging and personable as possible. The impersonal bureaucratic voice we hear in my revision would be inappropriate for the intended audience and purpose.

A third conclusion has to do with the response business and government writers hope their writing will bring. Many of the people I have talked to thus far do not consider themselves highly expert writers. But so long as they see some purpose to their writing, so long as they feel someone else will be informed or persuaded, influenced or helped by what they say, they write with a certain amount of good will and care. But when they sense that no one will ever pay attention to the substance of what they say, they approach their work with cynicism and indifference. The only skill or ingenuity they show is in devising reasons to avoid writing. In other words, the people I have talked to seem to need a response to the message they are trying to convey.

My last conclusion concerns editing, the final stage of the composing process when one proofreads, polishes, prepares a final draft. The lesson is this: Neatness and correctness count -- sometimes. I know administrators who will not allow a letter to leave their office unless it looks right. There can be no spelling errors, no mistakes with form, not even any places where a typist has obviously corrected a typographical error. These administrators feel that letters and reports reflect upon the people who prepare them. This writing must not reflect carelessness or ignorance. But I am speaking now only of certain pieces of writing, usually those that go to a superior or to someone outside the writer's institution. When I examine hand written first drafts or hastily written notes or inter-office memos, I find much less concern for editing. I do not mean to suggest that people deliberately affect illiteracy in their more casual writings. But their attention is not focused primarily on editing. There is neither the time nor the need to polish everything they write.

For a few moments, now, I would like to think about what all this implies for teaching. The first implication is that students need some preparation for writing, some attempt to explore a topic before they begin to write a draft. This may take the form of class discussion, role playing, or reading. Or it may be a more focused activity such as those mentioned in the first section of the "selected references" listed at the end of this article. The point is, we cannot simply exhort students to "think" about the topic we have assigned. We have to help them explore that topic in order to decide what they wish to say.

A second implication of the conclusions I have drawn is that we need to create or provide contexts for students' writing. That is, we should not simply assign topics; we should identify or help students identify the audiences and purposes for which they write. Further, we should ask students to write for a wide variety of audiences and purposes. There may be periods of time -- a semester or at most a year -- when we may want to emphasize one particular kind of writing. But I think our writing programs should include the diversity of writing tasks that writers actually have to do. In creating writing programs that have this diversity, we have several very useful sources to draw on. The first is quite well known: James Moffett's Student Centered Language Arts Curriculum K-13. Less widely known but very useful are Moffett's set of curriculum materials entitled Interaction and John Field and Robert Weiss's text Cases for Composition. All three of these show how to get students to write in a variety of forms for diverse audiences and purposes. Also some useful classroom materials concerning audience and purpose appear in texts by Carl Koch and James M. Brozie and by Gene Stanford and Marie Smith. (Again, see "selected references.")

Once we have helped students begin to think about a topic, and once we have helped them understand the audience and purpose for which a particular piece of writing is intended, we must be sure that their writing receives an appropriate response. That is, we cannot treat students' writing as a test of their ability to avoid certain kinds of "errors." For a very good survey of a variety of practical ways one might respond (or train students to respond) to a student's writing, I recommend Charles Cooper's article "Responding to Student Writing" and also Mary Beaven's article "Individualized Goal Setting, Self-Evaluation and Peer-Evaluation."

One final implication of the conclusions I drew earlier is that we may need to be more selective about editing. It may not make sense to ask students to edit everything they do; certainly there ought to be times, early in the composing process, when we tell them that, for the moment, they may not worry about spelling and grammar until after they have produced a piece of writing that deserves editing. Once we turn to editing -- and we should -- there are several points we can bear in mind. As Mina Shaughnessy has shown, many errors are not random. There may be, for example, twenty spelling errors on a paper, but they may reflect only a few basic problems. -- the students may, for example, make many errors because they are spelling phonetically or because they don't have a good rule for deciding when i follows e. We have some evidence that we can make significant improvements in students' editing if we follow several procedures: 1) focus on only one or two basic problems at a time 2) if we make judicious, limited use of drills and exercises, and 3) if we continually ask students to identify and correct these problems in their own writing. We have no basis for thinking that we can improve students' writing if all we have them do is work through page after page of workbook exercises or programmed materials on sentence structure, subject verb agreement, etc. But from work that is going on in several Buffalo city high schools, we do have evidence that if we follow the procedures I mentioned a moment ago and if we work with students individually and in small groups, we can improve students' editing. For information about how one urban school system -- with all the problems of any urban school system -- has managed to have this kind of success, I recommend the article by Nina Luban, Ann Matsuhashi, and Tom Reigstad.

The next day and a half will abound with suggestions for teaching and evaluating students' writing. By the end of that time you will have a list of materials and activities that will go well beyond what I have had time to suggest in this address. What I do have time to do now is to recapitulate my argument and return to a question that I posed at the very outset. If we want to improve students' writing we should ask them to do what writers do. That is, we should ask them to write in a variety of forms (ranging from informal notes to letters to formal reports), and we should teach them to make reasoned choices about form, style, and content, choices based on their sense of audience and purpose. We should teach students to edit their work, but we should not make editing the central part of a writing program.

Since we have a number of specific classroom procedures that will let us act upon these suggestions, we can, if we choose, relate our teaching of writing to the writing that goes on outside our classrooms. The question now is should we do this? How do we justify it to ourselves, our students, and our communities? One pragmatic argument, of course, is that we are preparing students to succeed in their chosen lines of work. And there is some merit to that argument. I know of large corporations and government agencies where people are not promoted unless they write with some skill. But the obvious limitation of the pragmatic argument is that not all of our students will spend their adult lives trying to climb a corporate or bureaucratic ladder to success. Some students will take jobs that require little or no writing. Other students will go to college where they will be required to do fairly specialized writing that may be, in some ways, quite different from that which we have considered this morning.

Given this limitation, the pragmatic argument is not entirely persuasive to me. Further, like other pragmatic arguments, it leads to this sort if circular reasoning: when I taught sixth and seventh grade I used to tell students that they needed to learn certain things because they would need this information when they went on to Mrs. Lovelace's eighth grade class. She in turn would argue that certain skills and information were important because her eighth graders would need them when they got to high school. When I taught high school, I made the same sort of argument based on what I thought students would need when they got to college. Some time later, when I found myself teaching my first English methods class to college undergraduates, I came close to telling them they should learn what I was teaching because they would need to know it -- when they went out to teach sixth and seventh grade.

The best way I know to break out of this circularity is to base our teaching on what we assume to be true of literate, mature human beings. This maturity presupposes the knowledge that our audience may differ from us in any number of ways, that different audiences may make quite diverse demands on us. To respond to these demands, we must know the alternatives that are possible and we must be able to make reasonable choices among these alternatives.

As teachers of writing, we are in a good position to help students understand these alternatives. By teaching them to do what writers have to do when they write, we can contribute to students' intellectual and personal growth. This is, of course, a very ambitious statement. But it is consistent with some of our basic values as English teachers and it suggests why I think that writing from the "real world," writing which people have to do as a regular part of their daily work, should influence what we do as teachers of writing. I look forward now to the next two days of workshops and talk about the teaching and evaluation of writing. I hope that our developing sense of what writers do when they write will provide a useful context for the work we do together.

Selected References

I. Helping Students Explore a Subject and Discover What They Want to Say

Peter Elbow, Writing Without Teachers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). See especially his discussions of "free writing" and of "the doubting game and the believing game."

Richard Gebhardt, "Imagination and Discipline in the Writing Class," English Journal, 66 (December, 1977), 26-32.

Carl Koch and James M. Brazil, Strategies for Teaching the Composing Process (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978). See especially the section on "Prewriting." For useful strategies for teaching organization and style, see "The Writing Stage" and "The Postwriting Stage."

Lee Odell and Joanne Cohick, "You Mean, Write It Over in Ink?" English Journal, 64 (December, 1975), 48-53.

_____ "Focus: The Process of Seeing and the Process of Writing," in The Writing Processes of Children, eds. Patrick J. Finn and Walter T. Petty. 1975. Available through the Department of Elementary and Remedial Education, SUNY-Buffalo.

Gene Stanford and Marie Smith, A Guidebook for Teaching Creative Writing (Boston, Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1977). Useful for teaching expository writing as well as "creative" writing.

II. Creating Writing Assignments in Diverse Modes for Diverse Purposes and Audiences

John P. Field and Robert H. Weiss, Case for Composition (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978).

Also see exercises concerning "audience" and "purpose" in texts by Koch and Brazil and Stanford and Smith, mentioned above.

III. Responding to Student Writing

Mary Beaven, "Individualized Goal Setting, Self-Evaluation, and Peer Evaluation," in Evaluating Writing, eds. Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977).

Charles R. Cooper, "Responding to Students' Writing," in The Composing Process of Children, eds. Patrick Finn and Walter Petty (Amherst, New York, 1975). Available through the Department of Elementary and Remedial Education, SUNY-Buffalo, Amherst, New York 14260.

Nina Luban, Ann Matsuhashi, and Tom Reigstadt, "One-to-One to Write: Establishing an Individual Conference Writing Place," English Journal, 67 (November, 1978), 30-35.

James Crabtree

Charles R. Chew

Sheila A. Schlawin

The Competency Test in Writing: What We Have Learned

Charles R. Chew, Acting Chief, Bureau of English Education

We seem to be nearing the end of what may be considered Phase I on a multi-phased project--and I am not certain at times if these phases are discrete - diverse - or distinguishable.

Our work began over a year ago and has gained momentum ever since. There does not appear to be a lessening of this intensity, and I suspect that this pace will continue well into the future.

In the last two months, we have come in contact with nearly 3,000 teachers--language arts supervisors/coordinators, department chairpersons, administrators, etc. We have travelled the width and breadth of the State.

During this time, we have had an opportunity to work closely with BOCES and with the Department offices in New York City. When we were in New York City for two weeks, we were assisted by Anita Dore and her colleagues. On a whole the experience has been an excellent one.

We have learned much during these past two months:

1. We know that it is possible to work 12-14 hours a day and to keep track of time by one's location.

2. We can tell you which BOCES provides a good lunch and which one does not.

3. We have learned that when one is in an accident that the first thing one does is get the license number of the car that hit you. (But on a more serious note and in direct relation to the Competency Test):

4. We have learned that there is often a breakdown in communication between administration and the teaching staff.

5. We have learned that there is very little communication among the various schools in a district and the teaching levels.

6. We have learned that in spite of all these obstacles that there is a concern throughout the State about how to do the job well and how to get on with it, so that the students in our charge benefit.

7. We sense a growing awareness of the monumental task which confronts us all.

The PCT in Writing

The PCT has by this time been given in many schools, but then there are schools that will not give the test until June. When we first began to plan the content of the conference, we were rather certain that the results would be back from these tests. You do remember that the test was originally scheduled for January - February - March - April - and now any time that you are ready; therefore, data which we thought we would have --we do not, at least not in great quantity. However, some information has begun to come to us. I will share that with you.

What We Have Learned:

1. Students do not seem to be able to understand the task or if they do, they do not understand what to do to complete the task.

2. Students do not know what information needs to be included in the letter.

3. Students do not know how to handle purpose and audience.

4. Students do not organize. They do not see the relationship of the parts to the unified whole. Response for the report shows this. In many cases, the students simply listed the data as given.

5. Papers do not seem to evidence rewriting. Although this may be difficult to discern, papers contain obvious errors which proofing and editing would eliminate. Rewriting and editing may be a part of the composing process which remains untaught.

6. Students seem to be having more difficulty with the writing test than the reading test. We do seem to have a start with a means to identify students with writing skills deficiencies.

7. Within the test, students seem to have less difficulty with the letter task than with the other two. In fact, members of our Steering Committee which met just last week have alerted us to the fact that the letter task may distort the assessment of the student's writing ability because it helps to inflate the grade. If this proves to be true, we will have to make some sort of adjustment in the test.

8. Students do the letter first although they can choose the order in which they do the writing tasks. By the time they get to the more difficult tasks of the test, they have run out of steam. This may necessitate a physical rearrangement of the tasks in the test.

It is essential that we get as much information from the PCT's as possible. The Bureau plans several courses of action to obtain this information. The Educational Testing Division of the Department will collect some statistical data for us by requesting results (scores) from the PCT in Writing and the PCT in Reading.

In addition, we will request a random sample of 1,000 test papers from the PCT in Writing. We will expend a considerable effort to glean as much information from these test samples as possible.

We can determine how well students performed--not by grade alone, but by looking closely at the actual product. We can see how the questions worked--were students able to use an acceptable business letter form--make an order which could be returned--could they categorize and classify the data for the report--could they persuade?

In addition we can analyze the student writing--although we cannot evaluate the composing process which brought about this product, we can determine some of the common strengths and weaknesses evident in the papers.

To supplement this request for sample papers, I have personally spoken to a number of people throughout the State and asked them to supply us with similar information.

This work, can, I believe, prove invaluable to the teachers in New York State as they continue the task of teaching writing.

If we can project our data gathering, we should be able to make some determination about student performance at different grade levels. We may be approaching the point of being able to determine what is possible at different grade levels (age levels) in writing skills.

From research done thus far, the development of writing skills appears to be glacier-like--and perhaps cannot be discerned in small time segments--but knowledge grows each day. We are beginning to understand that there are a number of ways to assess maturity in writing. We also have come to realize that there are discernible elements in a piece of persuasive discourse as well as in other discourse types.

We stand at the threshold of opportunity in the area of writing skills.

One unique feature of the PCT, it seems to me, is that for once the test signifies the start of a process. Many times a test indicates the end of something, or at least this has been true many times in English, but this test we hope will signify a start for many. The PCT should yield some valuable information for instructional purposes.

In the training packets that we used in our regional workshops, we presented two diagnostic instruments which can be used with student writing. These instruments help teachers to evaluate the composing process and the written product. (This same information will be available in a second manual which should be coming to school districts in June). This manual provides suggestions for instructional programs. Because that manual has not been printed yet, I will share some of its contents with you:

Providing Assistance in the Development of Writing Skills

The preliminary competency test in writing classifies students into groups according to their writing ability as indicated by their average test score. The following paragraphs define these groups and, for each group, discuss recommended developmental strategies and mandated remedial instruction.

Recommended Special Assistance: Students Scoring Above the State Reference Point

For students who achieve average test scores of 65% or above, no special writing instruction is mandated. Those students, however, whose average test scores are 80% or above should be given ample opportunity to write within the regular English program with emphasis on all three phases of the writing process: prewriting, writing, and rewriting. Small group work within the classroom can help in all three phases of this process. Attention needs to be given to the generation and discussion of ideas. Students should be required to write frequently in the various discourse modes for different purposes and audiences.

For students whose average test scores are between 65% and 79%, additional steps may have to be taken. The three responses of these students should be subjected to further ratings or, at the very least, to a close analysis similar to that performed on responses of students who score below 65%. These steps will help to assure that the students are properly placed in writing programs suited to their needs. In addition, the analysis of these students' responses should indicate the strengths and weaknesses of their writing skills. Such a determination must influence curriculum and instruction within the regular English program. Many of the strategies indicated below for the 50%-65% group will also be applicable for this group.

Mandated Special Assistance: Students Scoring Below the State-Reference Point

Providing special assistance has been mandated by the Regents for students scoring below the State Reference Point. The analysis of the students' responses to the preliminary competency test along with the analysis of other pieces of student writing is useful in identifying the amount and kind of assistance which will help to assure each student the supportive services needed to achieve the standard set for writing competency prior to taking the final Regents competency test.

For purposes of planning appropriate instructional programs, students scoring below the State Reference Point or cut-off score (65%) may be viewed as constituting two groups.

1. Students whose scores fall between 50% and 64%. Students in this group must be given intensified writing instruction within their required English program using a number of different strategies. These strategies include (1) using students' own pieces of writing in instruction rather than mass drill in unrelated materials, and (2) grouping of students within the regular English classroom according to needs, (3) using individual instruction and differentiated assignments, (4) using interviewing techniques with students, (5) encouraging peer teaching, and (6) providing practice in editing and revising. Such strategies imply that (a) class sizes are manageable, (b) curriculum materials are revised, and (c) inservice training is available. This training should focus on knowledge about the composing process, strategies for teaching the process, diagnosis of writing samples and techniques for remediation.

2. Students whose scores fall below 50%. These students have substantial writing deficiencies which will require intense individualized remediation. All data available for these students need to be examined carefully: reading scores, standardized test scores in language arts, class work, and previous participation in special programs. They may need individualized instruction in other subject areas, particularly reading.

These students must be instructed in all phases of the composing process as outlined in the NCTE statement referred to later in this material. Much attention needs to be given to the prewriting stage of the composing process. It is in this stage that students gain verbal power, learn to observe and describe, and develop a positive attitude toward themselves and their work. It is only after this important part of the composing process begins to take hold that such students can begin to improve the product phase of the process.

These students need additional help beyond that of the regular English program. This help may include work in a writing laboratory in which students can focus on particular weaknesses. They need individual instruction or, at the very least, work in a small group situation. Such students could profit from a tutorial approach to overcome skill deficiencies. To assist schools further, a more detailed publication delineating other options and describing those suggested here will be available at a later date.

As we in the Bureau evaluate student performance, our deductions are based on the product. We will have to rely on the clasroom teacher for an evaluation of the composing process.

Through a diagnosis of the process and the product, an instructional plan for the student develops. This will require a supreme effort from all of us because in many ways we are novices at the task.

We will have to change our writing programs. For too long, we have relied on old ways which do not work. For too long, we have marched 30 students through the same dull worksheet-textbook exercises-filling in the blanks or underlining subject once and predicates

twice. For too long, individualized instruction has meant that all students do the same assignment but at a different time, and for too long, we have believed that giving a writing assignment is teaching the students how to write.

These approaches can exist no longer. Our writing programs will have to change and a good starting point would be the program recommendation made by NCTE in Standards for Basic Skills Writing Programs. The recommendations are reproduced in the pamphlet, New York State Preliminary Competency Test in Writing: Manual for Administrators and Teachers.

What Lies Ahead?

We have begun to muster our forces. The interest in writing continues to grow. Title I-PSEN - Title II address basic skills, and for the first time writing skills and oral language skills are an integral part of legislation. Funding will come into existence for these areas.

This means that we must be ready.

We must develop inservice programs which are steeped in what we know about writing. We begin to see movement in that direction with the Writing Projects which have begun to develop in our State.

Our inservice must extend, I believe, beyond the classroom teacher to include in some way the school administrator. It is essential that these people know and understand the important work of the English teacher and the complexity of this person's job.

We must develop a sound expertise in teaching writing. At what seems to be a crucial time, we should have some data to document our importance. In addition, if we do not develop this expertise and be ready to lead--we will be led. There are already standing in the wings, those who would like to take up or take over our work. I would like to think that this is an altruistic gesture but I am cynical enough to suspect that Federal funding has something to do with this eagerness.

I am excited by the work which lies ahead. I am anxious to see those in Language Arts/English provide the leadership to benefit the student. The Bureau has come a long way--we have a long way yet to go. I hope we can travel the route together.

SOME PROPOSITIONS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF COMPOSING (BASED UPON RECENT RESEARCH AND THEORY ABOUT DISCOURSE AND COMPOSITION)

Richard L. Larson
Herbert H. Lehman College
of the
City University of New York

1. Writing is a process by which a writer attempts to communicate facts, perceptions, propositions, and opinions to a reader or readers in such a way as to win the respect, the understanding, and perhaps the assent of readers. Writing is not the execution of an exercise in the production of a kind, or "mode" of discourse. Recent examination of the four forms, or modes, of discourse (particularly work by James Moffett and James Britton) demonstrates the inadequacy of strict classifications of form, mode, or aim as a basis for making decisions about writing and for talking about the work of writers. Accordingly, writing should be taught by reference to the act of communication undertaken by the writer, not by reference to neat classifications of discourse. Writers do not plan their writing within "forms" or "modes."

2. Writing is a way of learning about a subject (and about oneself). One learns by recording perceptions, insights, and facts, by pondering these observations and setting down the results of one's pondering; by discovering resemblances and principles of connection between what one has written; by seeing the implications and consequences of what one has written. Indeed, one can hardly write well without learning in the process of doing so: almost no writer carries on and concludes the act of writing without seeing his/her subject differently from the way he/she saw it at the start of the process. The fact that writers make discoveries as they work must be allowed for in our talk about composing processes and in our teaching; the requirement that writers make extensive outlines in advance of writing, and then adhere to those outlines in their finished work, needs to be modified or dropped. This does not mean that planning is unimportant; quite the contrary, writers need a sense of their goals and of ways of getting to those goals when they begin writing. But writers' goals can change as they learn, and even if the goals remain constant the writers' way of arranging and developing materials to reach those goals may change as the writers learn. The work of Janet Emig helps us begin the understanding of how writing helps learning; our own experience will confirm that insights and ideas come to us as we write, and that writing down what we discover often clarifies, confirms, and helps us to explore the perceptions we come to as we go along.

3. Tagmemic theorists and Linda Flower have helped us to recognize that writing is a process of solving problems, and that all writers are in at least two ways solvers of problems. They solve the problems that come up as they try to begin and then to develop what they have started; their skill in solving these kinds of problems makes the difference between informative forward movement in writing and aimless false starts or empty (often repetitive) generalizations. Teachers need to observe their own and others' problem-solving behavior as writers in the development of ideas. Writers also solve problems in achieving forceful, economical, exact expression; they consider the meanings and emphases they wish to communicate, then choose from among the resources of language open to those ways of writing that will enable them best to reach their readers.

4. Revision is not merely editing or correcting errors, though, of course, writers do edit and correct. Revision should rather be thought of as an essential part of the total act of making a composition, and should be recognized to include perceiving the need for additional data and details for the development of a line of inquiry; perceiving the need to change a plan

for developing a paper; revising one's thesis or emphasis; perceiving that one's real subject differs from what was thought to be the subject; anticipating and taking account of readers' probable reactions to statements and arguments; and even discovering that what the writer had thought to be a subject worth discussing is not after all going to lead to fresh informative observations that are worth putting before a reader. Revision, also, is an act writers perform as they compose; it is not merely a step that occurs after a first draft has been completed, although the revising of a completed draft can be a step in the process of completing the finished piece. Revision, in short, is a creative act; it is an integral part even of the drafting of a piece of writing. One can even argue that part of the teaching of writing is the teaching of wise, apt revision. The work of Nancy Sommers and of Sondra Perl highlights not only the importance of revision, but also the erroneous notions about revising that many student writers appear to have. One task of the teacher, surely, is to enlarge students' perceptions of when revising can occur, what revising is, and how during revision the writer can try to "re-see," in whole or in part, the substance as well as the form of the composition.

5. Evidence is mounting that guided practice in various kinds of syntactic manipulation can help student writers to improve their powers of expression. (Sentence-combining, as Frank O'Hare, and now Daiker, Kerek, and Morenberg have shown, is a useful technique to teach;) practice in sentence-combining can not only widen the students' range of syntactic patterns (sometimes identified as accelerating the process of the writer's "maturing") but also increase their ability to write essays that are judged effective when read holistically by trained readers. Recently Lester Faigley published a similar demonstration about Christensen's "generative rhetoric," and argued as well that generative rhetoric assists in promoting invention -- the discovery of ideas to set forth and details to include in one's writing. Though professional writers and teachers of writing may not themselves profit from exercises in sentence-combining and generative rhetoric (then again, they might), there is now some support for the desirability of including at least some such exercises in courses in writing.

6. For inexperienced writers, making errors is a way of learning. (In a slightly different sense, the same is true for experienced writers: their perceptions of their own errors -- faulty ideas, bad sentences, unrecognized assumptions -- help them to learn, as they write, about how to sharpen ideas and perfect expression.) Mina Shaughnessy and the authors of the first number of the journal, Basic Writing, have shown that errors often result from students' efforts to apply what they think are sound principles of syntax or even of style; helping students to perceive where they have gone astray, and to understand how to modify their perceptions, is an essential part of teaching. Even if a given error does not trace back to a misapplied principle, the search for the reasons for error (in the difference between what the student hears people say, for example, and what they would write, or the difference between the way a speaker of another language would put an idea and the way a speaker of English would put it) can be instructive: it can help the teacher to understand the student's work more clearly and guide the application of corrective instruction. Students should be encouraged, therefore, not to view error as failure (or to view the goal of writing as the elimination of error -- a view that leads students to recognize in every piece of writing an opportunity to fail) but as an opportunity to learn and to improve their work. Error analysis can help teachers with their teaching; maybe it can help writers to perfect their writing (even if the errors of professional and adult writers will differ a good deal in degree of sophistication from those of students).

7. The teacher's role in the process of students' learning to write should be to act as supportive, interested audience -- as tutor and coach, as a consultant on improving the effectiveness of students' writing. Teachers might well examine whether holistic scoring techniques, primary trait scoring (see the NCTE publication, Evaluating Writing, ed. Cooper and Odell), or even E. D. Hirsch's notion of "relative readability" (see his Philosophy of Composition) have anything to suggest to them about ways of responding to students' writing. At the very least, students' papers should not be immersed in correction symbols slaved to a

prescriptive handbook -- a procedure widely advocated by such handbooks, and one that gives writers the impression that their work has a computer, not a person, for a reader. Their writing should, instead, receive a humane response from someone acting as if he/she is interested in what the writer has to say, wants to understand it, and wants even to believe it. Evaluation -- for purposes other than placement or exemption or determination of whether criteria for advancement have been met -- should be seen as part of teaching, not as the routine correction of error. For guidance in evaluating, teachers might consult the work of Moffett and the essays of Steven Judy and Charles Cooper. Regard a piece of writing as someone trying to discover and communicate, not as an opportunity for detection and punishment of the crimes of error.

(References to titles of works by the authors mentioned, and the places of their publication, will be found in a bibliography that I distributed to those who attended my talk.)

May, 1979

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RECENT WRITINGS ON COMPOSITON -- ARANGED ACCORDING TO A MODEL FOR VIEWING COMPOSITION AS A PEDAGOGICAL DISCIPLINE

R. L. Larson

1. THE MEDIUM OF WRITING

Classifications of Writing

James Britton, The Development of Writing Abilities, 11-18 (Macmillan Education, 1975)

James L. Kinneavy, A Theory of Discourse (Prentice-Hall, 1971)

James Moffett, "I, You, and It," CCC, May, 1965

Characteristics of Writing (theoretical perspectives)

Walker Gibson, Persona (Random House, 1969)

Maxine Hairston, "Carl Rogers' Alternative to Traditional Rhetoric," CCC, December, 1976

Willis Pitkin, Jr., "Hierarchies and the Discourse Hierarchy," College English, March, 1977

Characteristics of Writing (empirical studies)

Richard Braddock, "The Frequency and Placement of Topic Sentences in Expository Prose," RTE*, Winter, 1974

M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, Cohesion in English (Longman Group, 1976)

Sabina T. Johnson, "Some Tentative Strictures on Generative Rhetoric," College English, November, 1969

Charles R. Kline, Jr., and W. Dean Memering, "Formal Fragments: The English Minor Sentence," RTE, Fall, 1977

2. THE STUDENT'S WRITING: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND ERROR

Loren S. Barritt and Barry M. Kroll, "Some Implications of Cognitive-Developmental Psychology for Research in Composing," in Charles Cooper and Lee Odell, eds., Research on Composing: Points of Departure (NCTE, 1978)

James Britton, The Development of Writing Abilities, 11-18 (previously cited)

David Carkeet, "Understanding Syntactic Errors in Remedial Writing," College English, March, 1977

---

* Research in the Teaching of English (NCTE journal)

Elaine Chaike, "Who Can Be Taught?" College English, February, 1974

Walker Gibson, "The Writing Teacher as a Dumb Reader," CCC, May, 1979

Kellogg Hunt, "Early Blooming and Late Blooming Syntactic Structures," in Charles Cooper and Lee Odell, eds., Evaluating Writing (NCTE, 1977)

William F. Irmscher, "The Teaching of Writing in Terms of Growth," English Journal, December, 1977

Barry Kroll and John Schafer, "Error Analysis and the Teaching of Composition," CCC, October 1978

Walter Loban, Language Development: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (NCTE, 1976)

Andrea A. Lunsford, "What We Know--and Don't Know--About Remedial Writing," CCC, February, 1978

Journal of Basic Writing, I: "Error," 1975 (published by the Department of English, City College of the City University of New York)

Elaine Maimon and Barbara Nodine, "Measuring Syntactic Growth: Errors and Expectations in Sentence-combining Practice with College Freshmen," RTE, October, 1978

Roy O'Donnell, "A Critique of Some Indices of Syntactic Maturity," RTE, Spring, 1976

Mina Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations (Oxford University Press, 1977)

Richard Sterling, John Brereton, Sandra Perl, Writing Development Project to Investigate Characteristics of Growth, Maturity, and Complexity in Writing, supported by the Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (ongoing at the City University of New York; no findings published yet)

Murray A. Stewart, "Syntactic Maturity from High School to University: A First Look," RTE, February, 1978

3. THE WRITER'S AUDIENCE

Barry M. Kroll, "Cognitive Ego-centrism and the Problem of Audience Awareness in Written Discourse," RTE, October, 1978

Walter J. Ong, "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction,"PMLA, January, 1975

Joseph Williams, "Linguistic Responsibility," College English, September, 1977 (also ongoing unpublished research at the University of Chicago on the effects of various kinds and styles of writing on their audiences)

4. COMPOSING PROCESSES

Underlying Intellectual Acts

James Britton, "The Composing Processes and the Functions of Writing," in Charles Cooper and Lee Odell, eds., Research on Composing: Points of Departure (NCTE, 1978)

Frank D'Angelo, A Conceptual Theory of Rhetoric (Winthrop Publishers, 1975), especially the early chapters

Janet Emig, "Writing as a Mode of Learning," CCC, May, 1977

Carol Koch and James Brazil, Strategies for Teaching the Composing Process (NCTE, 1978)

Vivian Davis, "Toward a Model of the Composing Process," Arizona English Bulletin, October, 1976

Peter Elbow, Writing Without Teachers (Oxford University Press, 1973)

Janet Emig, "The Biology of Writing: Another View of the Process," in Walter Petty and Patrick Finn, eds., The Writing Processes of Students (Report of the Annual Conference on Language Arts, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1975), pp. 11-20

Janet Emig, The Composing Processes of Twelfth-Graders (NCTE, 1971)

Donald Graves, "An Examination of the Writing Process of Seven-Year Old Children," RTE, Winter, 1975

Terry Mischel, "A Case Study of a Twelfth-Grade Writer," RTE, Winter, 1974

Sandra Perl, "Unskilled Writers as Composers," New York University Education Quarterly, Spring, 1979

Sharon Piamko, "A Description of the Composing Process of College Freshman Writers," RTE, February, 1979

Charles K. Stallard, "An Analysis of the Writing Behavior of Good Student Writers," RTE, Fall, 1974

Processes for Discovering

Kenneth Burke, from A Grammar of Motives, in W. Ross Winterowd, Contemporary Rhetoric: A Conceptual Background with Readings (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975)

Linda Flower and John Hayes, "Problem-Solving Strategies and the Writing Process," College English, December, 1977

Richard L. Larson, "Discovery Through Questioning: A Plan for Teaching Rhetorical Invention," in Winterowd, above

Donald Murray, "Write Before Writing," CCC, December, 1978

Michael Paul and Jack Kligerman, Invention: A Course in Prewriting and Composition (Winthrop Publishers. 1973)

D. Gordon Rohman, "Pre-Writing: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process," CCC, May, 1965

Richard Young, Kenneth Pike, and Alton Becker, Rhetoric: Discovery and Change (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970)

Procedures for Arranging and Connecting

Richard L. Larson, "Toward a Linear Rhetoric of the Essay," CCC, February, 1966

Paul Rodgers, Jr., "A Discourse-Centered Rhetoric of the Paragraph," CCC, February, 1966

William Stalter, "A Sense of Structure," CCC, December, 1978

Richard Warner, "Teaching the Paragraph as a Structural Unit," CCC, May, 1979

W. Ross Winterowd, "The Grammar of Coherence," in Contemporary Rhetoric, above

Processes for Creating Sentences

Elaine Chaika, "Grammars and Teaching," College English, March, 1978

Francis Christensen, "A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence," in Notes Toward a New Rhetoric (Harper and Row, 1967)

Frank O'Hare, Sentence-Combining: Improving Student Writing Without Formal Grammar Instruction (NCTE, 1973)

Joseph Williams, "Defining Complexity," College English, March, 1979

Revision

Donald Murray, "Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery," in Cooper and Odell, Research on Composing: Points of Departure (cited above)

Nancy Sommers, "The Need for Theory in Composition Research," CCC, February, 1979

5. CLASSROOM INTERVENTION IN THE ACT OF COMPOSING

Teacher-Class Interaction

William Coles, Teaching Composition (Hayden Books, 1974)

William Coles, The Plural I (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978)

Mary Edel Denman, "The Measure of Success in Writing," CCC, February, 1978

Peter Elbow, Writing Without Teachers, previously cited

Ken Macrorie, Telling Writing (Hayden Books, 2nd Edition, 1976)

James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse (Houghton, Mifflin, 1968)

Robert Zoellner, "Talk-Write: A Behavioral Approach to Pedagogy," College English, January, 1969

Group Work

Kenneth Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning: Some Practical Models," College English, February, 1973

Thom Hawkins, Group Inquiry Techniques in Teaching Writing (NCTE, 1976)

Journal of Basic Writing, II: "Courses," 1976 (see previous entry for data about publication)

Assignments for Writing

Eleanor Hoffman and John Schifsky, "Designing Writing Assignments," English Journal, December, 1977

Demonstrations and Exercises

Elaine Chaika, "Grammars and Teaching," College English, March, 1978

Warren Combs, "Further Effects of Sentence-Combining on Writing Ability," RTE, Fall, 1976

Donald Daiker, Andrew Karek, and Max Morenberg, "Sentence-Combining and Syntactic Maturity in Freshman English," CCC, February, 1978 (See also their article in RTE, October, 1978.)

W. B. Elley et al., "The Role of Grammar in a Secondary School English Curriculum," RTE, Spring, 1976

Lester Fargley, "Generative Rhetoric as a Way of Increasing Syntactic Fluency," CCC, May, 1979

George Hillocks, "The Effect of Observational Activities on Student Writing," RTE, February, 1979

Lee Odell, "Measuring the Effect of Instruction in Pre-Writing," RTE, Fall, 1974

Frank O'Hare, Sentence-Combining, cited previously

Peter Schiff, "Problem-Solving and the Composition Model: Reorganization, Manipulation, Analysis," RTE, October, 1978

Sandra Stotsky, "Sentence-Combining as a Curricular Activity: Its Effects on Written Language Development and Reading Comprehension," RTE, Spring, 1975

Richard E. Young and Frank Koen, "The Tagmemic Discovery Procedure and Its Uses in the Teaching of Rhetoric," Department of Humanities, College of Engineering, University of Michigan, 1973

Cross-Disciplinary Writing

Nancy Martin et al., Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum (Ward Lock Educational, 1976)

6. MAKING JUDGMENTS ABOUT WRITING (THE PRODUCT)

Charles Cooper, "Responding to Student Writing," in Walter Petty and Patrick Finn, eds., The Writing Processes of Students (Report of the Annual Conference on Language Arts, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1975), pp. 31-39

Charles Cooper and Lee Odell, eds., Evaluating Writing (NCTE, 1977), especially the pieces by Cooper and Lloyd-Jones

Paul Diederich, Measuring Growth in Writing (NCTE, 1974)

Ann O. Gebhard, "Writing Quality and Syntax: A Transformational Analysis of Three Prose Samples," RTE, October, 1978

Fred I. Godshalk, Frances Swineford, and William Coffman, The Measurement of Writing Ability, College Entrance Examination Board Research Monograph, Number 6, 1966

E. D. Hirsch, Jr., The Philosophy of Composition (University of Chicago Press, 1977).

Craig Hogan, "Let's Not Scrap the Impromptu Test Essay Yet," RTE, Winter, 1977

Stephen Judy, "Writing for the Here and Now: An Approach to Assessing Student Writing," English Journal, January, 1973

Ellen Nold and Sara Freedman, "An Analysis of Readers' Responses to Essays," RTE, Fall, 1977

Lee Odell, "Responding to Student Writing," CCC, December, 1973

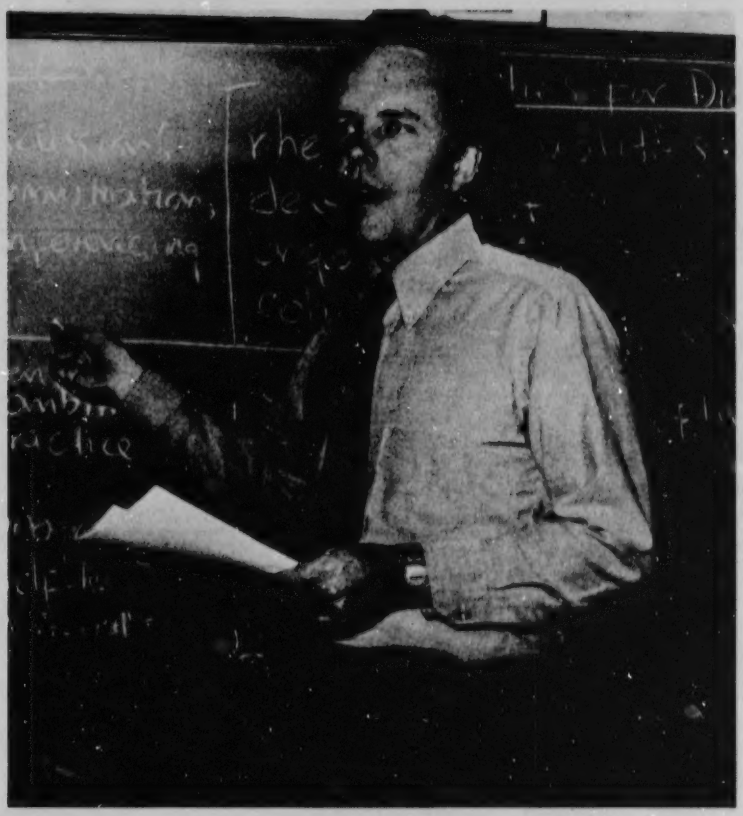
Sara Sanders and John Littlefield, "Perhaps Test Essays Can Reflect Significant Improvement in Freshman Composition," RTE, Fall, 1975

7. BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND OVERVIEWS OF RESEARCH

Elizabeth F. Haynes, "Using Research in Preparing to Teach Writing," English Journal, January, 1978

Richard L. Larson, annual selected, annotated bibliographies of research and writing on composition and the teaching of composition, in the May issues of CCC, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, and 1979

Gary Tate, ed., Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographical Essays (Texas Christian University Press, 1976)



Charles R. Cooper

Ann Matsuhashi

Workshop Participants

Diagnosing Student Writing: Procedures for the One-to-One Writing Conference*

Charles R. Cooper
Ann Matsuhashi
Department of Instruction
SUNY at Buffalo

*Prepared for Competency Testing and Beyond: Improving Student Writing, May 24-25, 1979, Albany, New York.

These procedures outline one way of carrying out an individual writing conference. The procedure is designed so that the tutor can focus on only one problem at a time. Furthermore, by following these procedures from start to finish the tutor will be able to tackle the larger, more encompassing problems first. We have found that helping the writer solve larger problems--such as confusion about audience or purpose--often clears up other problems such as organization and diction. Most importantly, we encourage the writing tutor to respond to the writer as a listener, an editor, and a reader--not as a judge or examiner.

Finally, two advantages of this conferencing procedure: First, the procedure is general enough to apply to the wide variety of writing our students engage in. Second, this conferencing procedure allows the tutor to work with the writer at any stage of the composing process-from no notes or draft, to partial draft, to revising a completed draft.

Procedures for Conducting a One-to-One Writing Conference

Go through these steps in every conference:

1. Develop a comfortable working rapport with the writer.
   Work toward a writer-responder relationship rather than a student-teacher relationship.

2. Determine whether or not the writer understands the assignment.

   Ask: Do you understand the assignment? Can you tell me about it in your own words?

3. Determine whether or not the writer has a clear sense of her audience and purpose.

   Ask: Who might be reading this? Parents? Friends? Readers of the school newspaper? (Try to avoid naming the teacher as sole audience)

   Ask: What is your purpose? Do you aim to explain? Persuade? Express your feelings?

Go through these steps when the writer does not have a draft:

1. Explore with the writer how she might go about gathering or producing ideas and materials.

2. Explore with the writer some possibilities for organizing the ideas and materials.

Go through these steps when the writer has a completed draft:

1. Ask the writer to read the draft aloud to you.

   In re-reading the draft aloud to an immediate audience, the student often sees the piece anew and is able to correct jumbled sentences, non-standard features, missing words, and even recognize larger problems of organization.

2. Help the student revise the draft.

   The tutor, primarily through skillful questioning and by responding as an attentive listener, helps the writer to recognize and solve problems in the draft such as organizing adding detail, clarifying, sentence-combining or simplifying, and diction.

3. Help the student to proofread the draft.

   The final step involves careful polishing activity, during which the tutor and student look for mechanical errors and prepare the pieces to be read by others.

One last note:

Interpersonal Clues for a Successful Conference

1. Maintain eye contact.
2. Ask the writer's name and use it.
3. Restate what the writer says to be sure you've understood.
4. Maintain an alert, interested, and open body posture.

We are indebted to Robert Gundlach of the Writing Place at Northwestern University for this workshop activity as well as many of his conferencing techniques. Prior to the opening of the SUNY/B Writing Place, Gundlach spoke at a conference entitled: "What to Say to a Writer" and offered valuable advice for establishing Writing Places.

WRITING: TO ASSIGN IS NOT TO TEACH

by

Cecelia M. Kingston
Coordinator of English K-12
Public Schools of the Tarrytowns
North Tarrytown, New York

Presented at the Annual Conference of the Bureau of English Education
"Competency Tests and Beyond . . ."
May 25, 1979 Albany, New York

Several years ago a nation was shocked when Newsweek - in bold and blazing headlines - asked: Why can't Johnny write? A nation which had for many years been grappling with Johnny's inability to read was not prepared to receive the news that not only could Johnny not read, but he also could not write.

The announcement triggered a feud that still continues. Parents, tired of educational jargon, impatient with what they considered to be the permissiveness of the schools, and angry about the ever-escalating cost of education, lashed out, "Johnny can't write because you teachers don't teach him." Educators, frustrated by the students, demoralized by the mounting criticism from the community, and angry about the ever-increasing budgetary constraints, retaliated by saying, "Of course we teach Johnny how to write! Haven't you seen those papers we spend long evening hours correcting? Haven't you seen the vocabulary tests, the spelling lists, and the grammar tests? The problem must be with Johnny - perhaps he can't learn how to write, or perhaps he does not want to learn how to write."

Interestingly, as the frustration turns into panic, and as legislatures across the nation begin to vote in minimum competency tests in writing in a desperate attempt to bring about student improvement in writing, no one has challenged the contention that Johnny cannot write. Neither the parents, nor the public, nor the educators has stated that Johnny can write. In fact, the reaction of each group - including that of the instructional group - has suggested that the question that Newsweek dared to ask only confirmed what each had already suspected, namely, that Johnny cannot write!

Why can't Johnny write? While Newsweek's question may have been rhetorical, it is to us - the educators - that the public looks for the answer, and justifiably so. Are we not the ones who have accepted the task of teaching the young how to write? Then, it is we who must be held ultimately accountable. We can neither react emotionally or defensively to the charges thrown at us, nor turn the problem over to the legislatures, to the publishers, or to the public-at-large. Since it is we who are the professionals, it is we who must solve the problem which confronts us.

Parents say we don't teach children to write; we say we do. Yet, colleges - including ivy league schools - claim that the young people cannot write; industry claims that high school and college graduates cannot write; the business world claims that their employees cannot write. Yet, we continue to maintain that although we teach the children how to write, they just do not learn how to write. Obviously we are faced with a contradiction. It was William James, I believe, who once said, "Where there is a contradiction, a distinction must be made." If we are teaching, should not the children be learning? Is that not the assumption upon which our educational system is built? Perhaps the time has come for us to make the distinction!

One day, many years ago, a group of automobile designers gathered in a brainstorming session to plan for the car of the future. For long hours, they debated about the kind of car the American of the future needed. The solution to their problem became very obvious when the right question was asked, specifically, "Why, in an affluent two-car family, does it take a 4,000 pound car to drive a 110 pound woman, one mile to a store, to buy a one pound loaf of bread?" It was that question that gave birth to the American-made compact car.

What, then is the question that we should be asking about Johnny's inability to write? How can we make the distinction which will resolve the obvious contradiction? It is clear that the questions we have asked must not have been the right ones? (1) Why can't Johnny write? (2) Why can't teachers teach? (3) Why doesn't Johnny learn? Repeatedly, these questions - and similar ones - have led us down blind alleys.

Should we, perhaps, be asking, "Who is this Johnny, anyway?" It is possible that if we knew exactly which students could not write on a level commensurate with their ability, that we could then solve the problem? Unfortunately, no! In fact, the answer to this question just compounds our problem and we become even more uncomfortable. Johnny is not only the high school drop-out and the learning disabled child, but he is also the average-ability student and the honors student. Johnny is not only the laborer of tomorrow, the businessman, and the salesman, but he is also the teacher of tomorrow, the doctor and the engineer. Johnny is not only the student enrolled in a junior college, but he is the freshman accepted at Yale and at Princeton. What then is wrong?

Perhaps we should examine the way we teach writing. Could it be that Johnny, who seems capable of learning, does not write well because of the way that we approach the teaching of writing? Perhaps the question we should ask is: "How do we teach writing?"

Few are the teachers who have not discussed a topic sentence with a class; rare are the teachers who have not taught spelling, grammar, usage and punctuation. Rarer yet are the teachers who have not spent long evening hours - and weekends - meticulously correcting in red ink every error to be found in dull compositions. In fact, as criticism of Johnny's ability to write increases, teachers intensify their instruction in grammar, spelling and vocabulary; ditto machines turn out more and more work sheets; schools invest in more and newer traditional grammar texts, and publishers step up the printing of more language skills texts. But, the critics keep shouting, "Johnny can't spell; he can't punctuate; he has a limited vocabulary." Is it possible that to teach parts of speech is not to teach writing? Is it possible that to correct errors is not to teach?

Let us for a moment examine the typical handling of a writing assignment in a class. Although in every school there are some exceptions, the procedure followed in a writing lesson usually comprises six steps: (1) a topic is assigned - time and length are often stipulated, (2) the composition is corrected - often meticulously, (3) the composition is assigned a grade, (4) the paper is returned to the student, (5) those who have done poorly are admonished, and (6) the next topic is assigned. Is it possible that to assign and correct a composition is not to teach writing?

Perhaps it is heretical for an educator to make this statement, but I do not believe that we teach writing. We may assign writing; we may give spelling tests and grammar tests; we may give extended vocabulary lists, but we do not teach writing. Let me illustrate.

One evening, not too long ago, I was in the home of a third grader. After dinner, he announced to his parents that he had to write a composition. The parents were delighted, and they asked what his topic was. He replied, "I have to write on the topic: How to do

something." The helpful parents immediately gave him ideas. Couldn't he explain how to play football, make a salad, make a bed, make pudding. The child listened and said nothing. The parents left the room. When the parents returned fifteen minutes later, they found him sitting motionlessly at the table, his paper blank, tears rolling down his chubby cheeks, and his pencil firmly lodged between his fingers. When rebuked for not having written, he said, "I don't know how to start." Had that third grade teacher taught writing?

I know of a fifth grader who upon arriving home after school on day announced, "Mom, you have to help me with my book report tonight. I have to write about Charlotte's Web, but, I don't know what a book report is." Did that fifth grade teacher teach writing? (By the way, as an aside, I should mention that the child's mother did help her develop an outline for writing a book report that evening. When the child's paper was returned to her by the teacher several days later, the teacher did announce proudly to the class, "Mary is the only one to get an A. She had such a well-organized essay. You should read hers so you will learn.")

I recently heard of a seventh grade student whose composition was returned to her with a large C boldly placed at the top of the page. Next to the C the teacher had written "good." The child's eyes filled up with tears because she had worked very hard on the composition. She went to the teacher for an explanation because she wanted very much to learn how to improve her writing. She said to the teacher, "Could you tell me what I should have done to get an A?" Her teacher impatiently retorded, "Young lady, you are too grade conscious. Just accept the fact that you got a C because your paper was better than some and not as good as others!" Was that seventh grade teacher teaching writing?

I had the opportunity -- some years ago -- to observe a ninth grade teacher working with an above average group. At the beginning of the class, she announced that five of the students were to go to the library immediately, write an analysis of Faulkner's The Bear, and return to the class before the end of the period - forty-two minutes later - with the essay. When I questioned her about the vagueness of the assignment and the impossibility of the task, she replied that since the children were bright she felt she had to challenge them. She believed that she would be spoon-feeding them by giving too many specifics. Was she teaching writing?

Recently, a creative writing teacher began his course by giving the seniors a three-page list of literary devices used in poetry. For homework, they were asked to write a poem incorporating five of the devices. Was that teacher teaching writing?

These are just a handful of experiences that are typical of what we in the schools often do in the name of teaching writing. I contend that when we assign topics, specify writing time, predetermine the number of words, correct the mechanical errors, assign a grade, and make few if any specific comments about the content of a composition, we are neither teaching writing, nor encouraging excellence in writing, nor bringing about good writing.

Implicit in such an approach to writing are a number of critical assumptions -- all false. For instance, such an approach assumes:

1. that the writer understands the question or topic
2. that the writer knows why he is writing and for whom he is writing
3. that the writer has at his immediate disposal the necessary knowledge and skills to develop the topic
4. that the writer is capable of writing an excellent first draft
5. that the writer learns by failing -- or at least by not succeeding - the first time

6. that the writer is inspired to do better if he is criticized or given a low grade

7. that the writer knows how to improve his paper, correct his errors

8. that mechanical errors are true indicators of the degree of writing ability a person has

9. that the writer does less than he is capable of doing -- deliberately

10. that the writer knows how to develop the topic - that is, whether he should compare, discuss, define, analyze, review, argue, defend or refute.

Pretend for a moment that you are attending a writing workshop and that the first request that the workshop leader makes is that in half-an-hour you are to write a 300-400 word essay about the teaching of writing. Since the leader gives you no rationale for the assignment, you can only assume that the assignment is to be written so that it can be read and evaluated by the leader. How do you react? What emotions do you experience? How effective do you feel your composition will be?

How different would your response to the task have been if the leader had begun by stating, "We will be compiling a manual of effective techniques for teaching high school students how to write exposition. As participants in this workshop, your task will be to write a description of at least one technique you have found successful in teaching exposition. I will compile all of your reports into a manual for distribution to all schools in the State in the fall. Before you leave, I will give you a format which I would like to have you follow. Your deadline is three weeks from today."

Would not the paper that you might have written in response to the second request be superior to the paper you might have written in response to the first request? Why? Could it be that the quality of your writing for the second task would have been influenced by the fact that when doing the later assignment, you: (1) had a specific purpose for writing, (2) had a specific audience, (3) had an understanding that what you had to say would be important for someone else, (4) had available the necessary data or details, (5) had a limited focus and specific directions, (6) had sufficient time for writing a first draft, for editing, and for revising, and (7) had greater interest in working on a meaningful task.

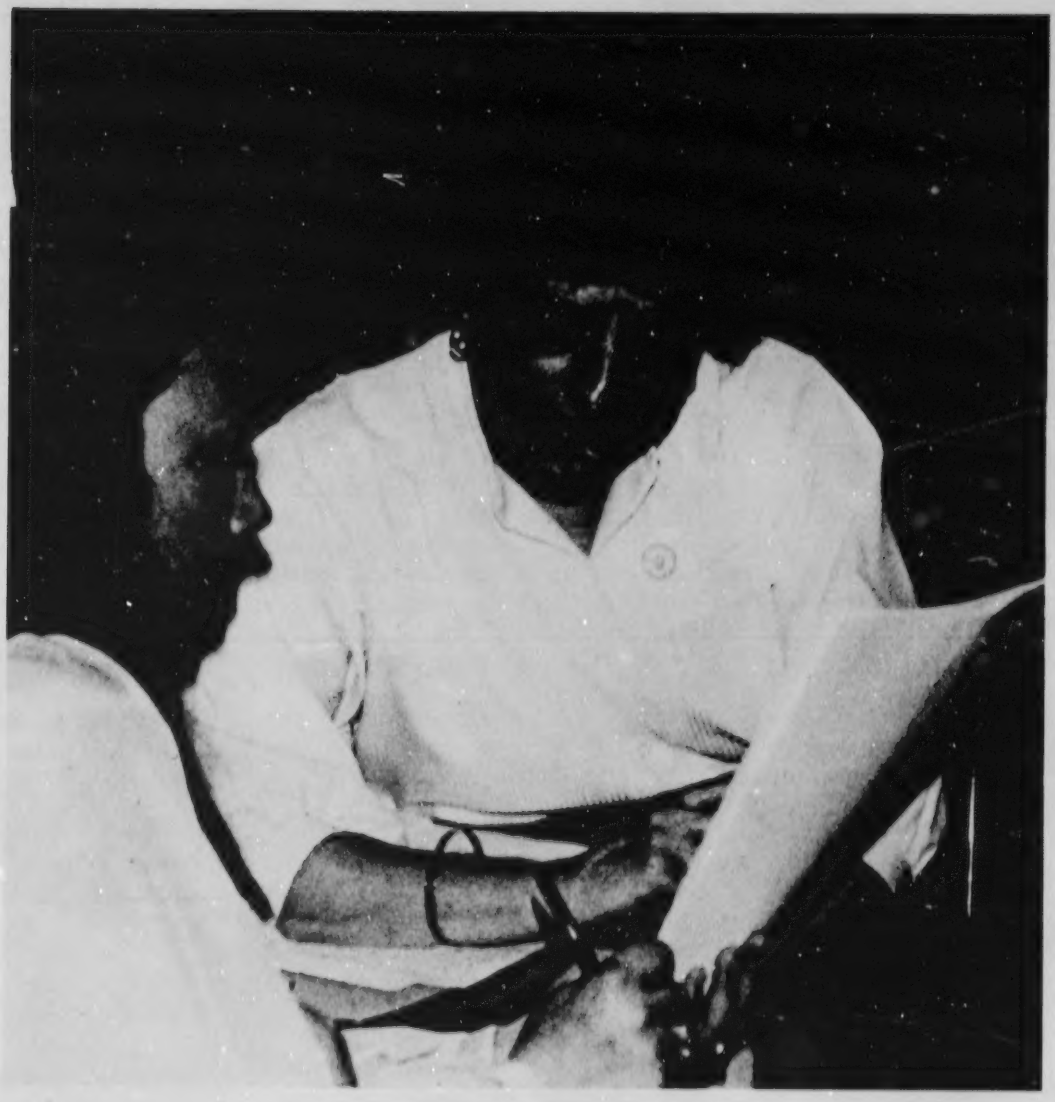
Perhaps we are finally ready to ask the right questions: What is the writing process? What, specifically, is the process common to the writing of a note, a love letter, a report, a research paper, a doctoral dissertation - and, yes, even a novel and a poem? What is the process that you and I go through each time that we write?

Why can't Johnny write? We can only answer that question when we know: (1) what the nature of writing is, (2) what the process of writing is, and (3) how our approach to teaching writing correlates with our understanding of both the nature of writing and composing process.

I contend that once we understand the composing process, which I have graphically depicted on the following page (Addendum #1), once we come to grips with the true nature of writing, we can ask: What must we do to teach writing effectively?

Johnny will not learn how to write until we learn how to correlate our teaching of writing with our understanding of the composing process. The purpose of the seminar "Writing: To Assign Is Not To Teach" is to demonstrate dramatically not only that we assign writing and do not teach writing (Addendum #2), but also to illustrate specific ways in which our knowledge of the composing process can help us to teach writing effectively.

It is true that if Johnny is taught how to write, he will learn how to write. Our problem has been in our approach to the teaching of writing which failed to take into consideration why man writes and how he writes.

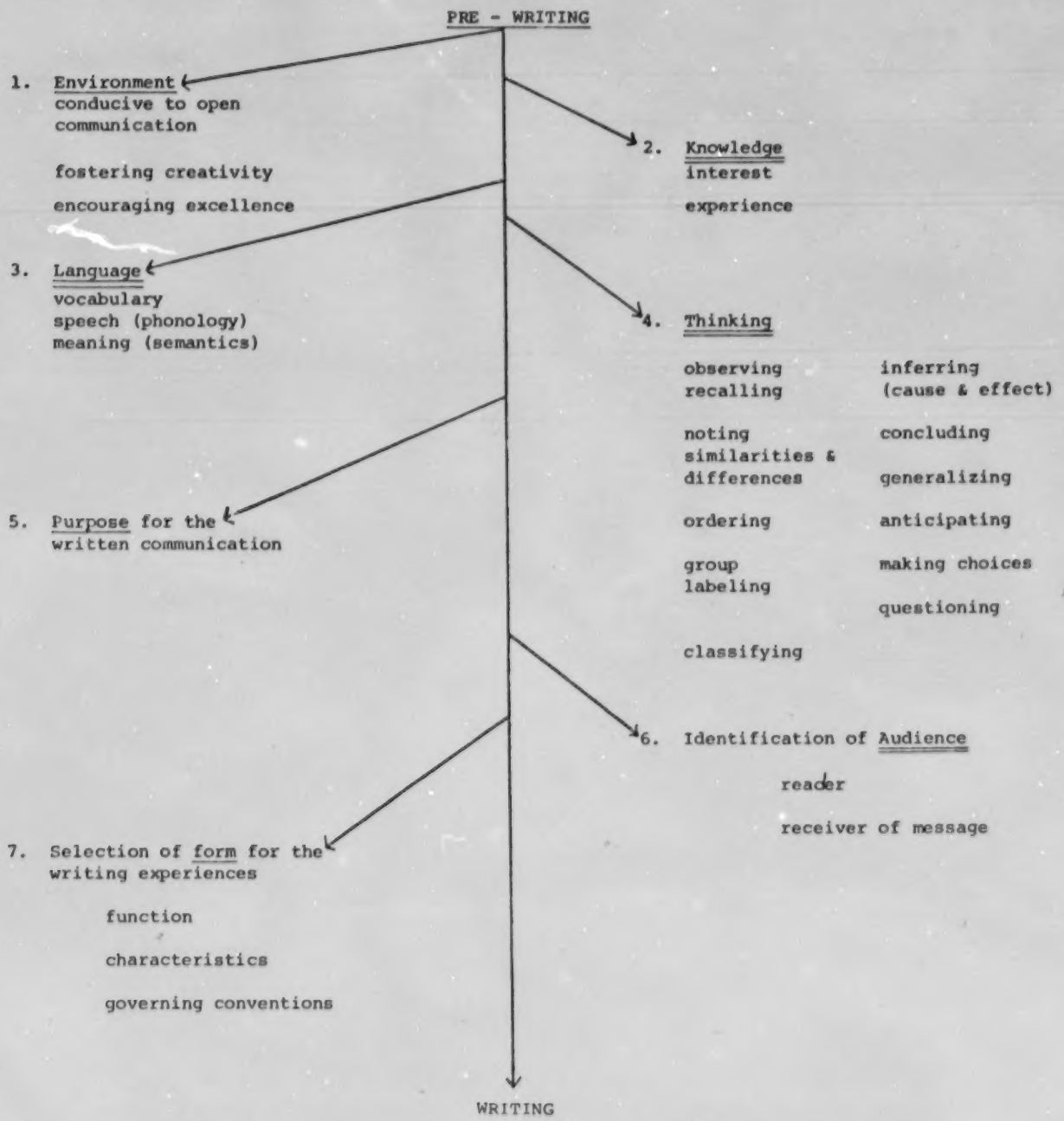


Cecelia Kingston

Cecelia Kingston
Coordinator of English

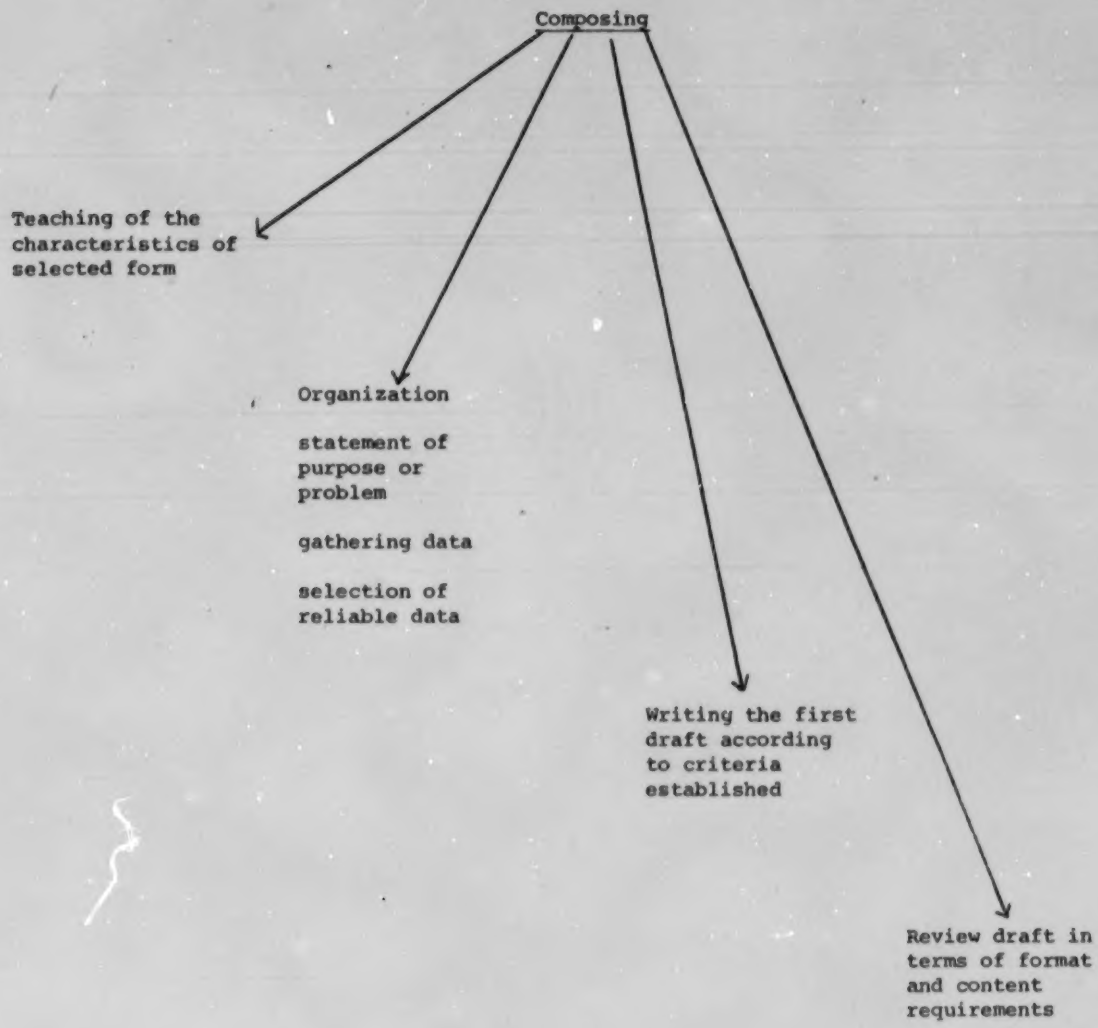
ADDENDUM #1

COMMUNICATION: The Writing Process



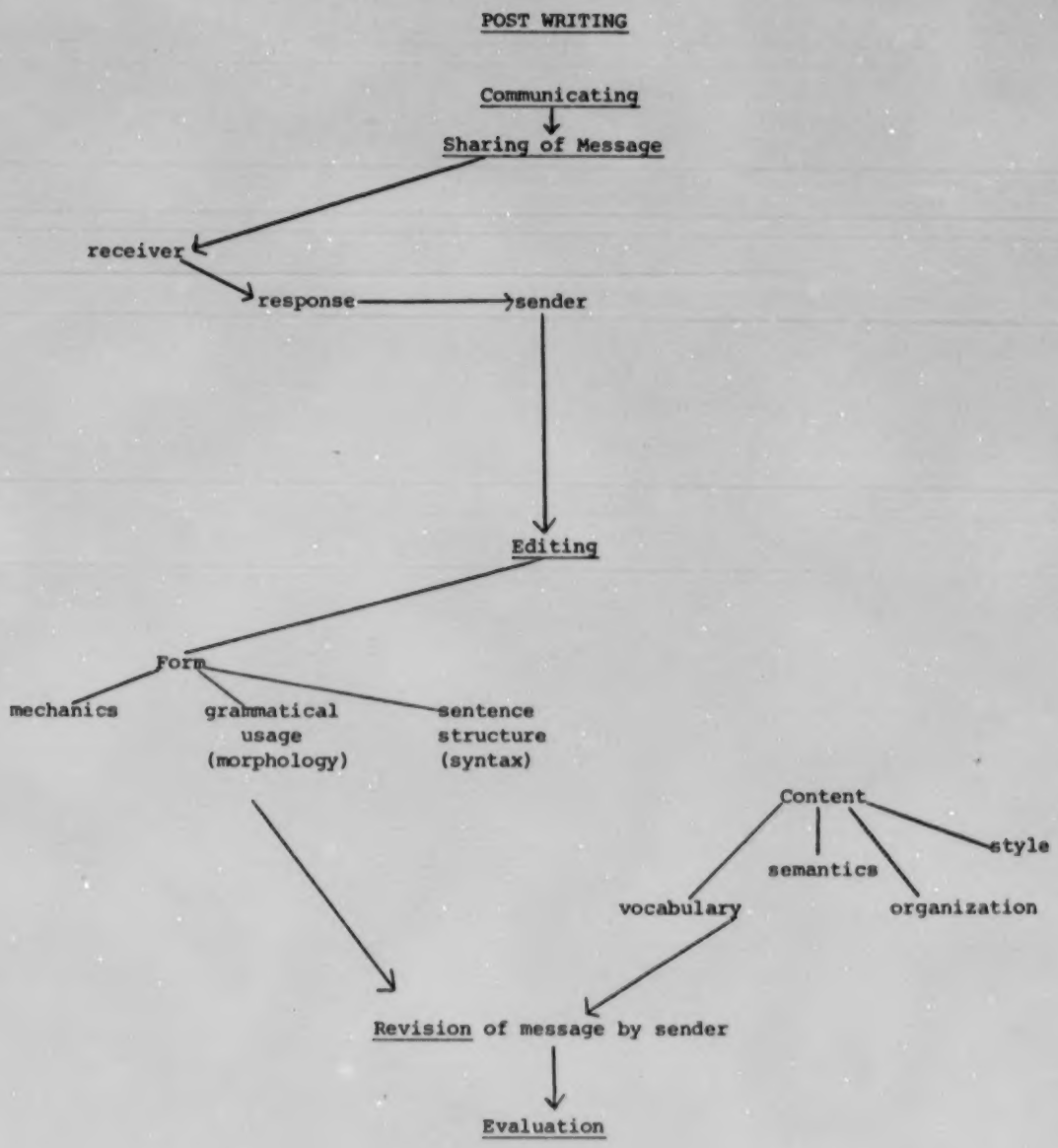
C. Kingston
(c) 1978

WRITING


Composing
Teaching of the characteristics of selected form
Organization
statement of purpose or problem
gathering data
selection of reliable data
Writing the first draft according to criteria established
Review draft in terms of format and content requirements

Post Writing

C. Kingston
(c) 1978



C. Kingston
(c) 1978

September 1976

ADDENDUM #2

ASSIGNING VS. TEACHING

by

Cecelia Kingston
Coordinator of English
Public Schools of the Tarrytowns

When writing is assigned	When writing is taught
1. Teacher asks student to write on one topic from a list of topics which may or may not be related to content of the course or experiences of student.	1. Teacher encourages student to communicate his ideas precisely and effectively through writing.
2. Topic or question is usually general, rarely structured.	2. Topic or question is usually specific, often highly structured.
3. Topic does allow for sloppy thinking, glittering generalities.	3. Topic forces precise thought, supporting details.
4. Audience for paper is rarely identified.	4. Audience for paper is specifically identified.
5. Purpose for writing assignment is nebulous or vague.	5. Purpose for writing assignment is specifically articulated.
6. Student assumes he is writing for a grade.	6. Student knows he is writing to improve his ability to express himself precisely.
7. Student is often asked to write spontaneously.	7. Student is encouraged to think about his subject.
8. Student is often given a time limit or a work limit or both.	8. Student is encouraged to judge the scope of this purpose in terms of the time he has and the number of words it would take to fulfill his purpose.
9. Student is required to hand in his first draft for a grade.	9. Student is encouraged to review and revise his first draft.
10. Teacher comments on paper are usually negative, most often corrections of errors.	10. Teacher comments stress the positive and are constructive about the negative aspects.
11. Corrections are usually in reference to mechanical errors.	11. Recommendations for improvement in style, format and organization of thoughts are made.

When writing is assigned	When writing is taught
12. Usually every error is corrected on every page by the teacher.	12. Often only certain elements of composition - errors - are corrected for a specific assignment.
13. Most of the teachers' time is spent correcting papers.	13. Most of the teacher's time is spent in class teaching the writing skills.
14. The teacher corrects every paper.	14. The teacher encourages self-evaluation and group evaluation of most of the papers.
15. Student never quite knows how teacher arrives at grade.	15. Student always knows why he earns a grade.
16. All writing assignments tend to be essays-usually between 200-300 words.	16. Writing assignments vary in length according to purpose of the assignment.
17. Student is criticized for not making his purpose clear, for not organizing his thoughts logically, for not developing his ideas.	17. Student is taught how to limit his purpose, organize his thoughts, and develop his ideas.
18. Student is not aware of significant improvement in his writing.	18. Student is aware of significant growth - or lack of growth - in specific areas.
19. Student is asked to analyze, compare, describe, define, review, trace, but his is not taught how to organize his thoughts to succeed in his goals.	19. Student are given models of essays which analyze, or compare, etc., and/or they are guided into developing the format best suited for analysis, or comparison, etc.
20. Student is required to rewrite-in some cases. But rewriting usually only applies to corrections in grammar, usage, etc.	20. Student is encouraged to revise, to edit, to improve - and to correct first draft, then resubmit.
21. Student is required to write without much pre-thought.	21. Student is motivated into thinking about what he is to write.
22. Student rarely knows what style means or what his style is.	22. Student is taught to analyze his own style.
23. Student is assigned a number of different writing experiences: poem, play, book review, term paper.	23. Student is taught to handle a variety of writing forms.
24. Student and teacher are bored by what he writes.	24. Student and teacher are excited about what students writes.

C. Kingston
(c) 1976

An Overview of the Capital District Writing Project

What We Learned About Teacher In-Service

by Doris M. Quick

During the past school year, the Capital District Writing Project, sponsored by the National Endowment of the Humanities and the English Department of the State University of New York at Albany, has conducted more than two hundred and fifty hours of in-service workshops for teachers in local school districts. As a result of this intensive initiation into the rites of teacher in-service, we feel we've learned some important facts about successful in-service we're willing to share. And we made some mistakes you might as well benefit from too.

But first, some background on CDWP. We are part of the National Writing Project network, an outgrowth of the Bay Area Writing Project. The goal of CDWP is to improve student writing skills, kindergarten through college. To that end, teachers are trained in our summer institutes and in our academic year in-service sessions.

In the summer, our training has three components: First, we read and discuss current research and theory on the teaching of composition; Second, we each demonstrate for the group a successful composition lesson; And finally, we write and share our writing with colleagues in small groups. Here we receive critiques and comments, and in the process, gain confidence in our own skills, become sensitized to some of the problems our students may face, and ultimately begin to feel like authorities. Armed with this background, we face our students with a new sense that we know what we are about.

Then these summer participants are qualified as in-service specialists, prepared to go out into the capital district schools to share expertise in in-service workshops. A brochure describing our in-service offerings for the 1978-79 year is attached to this report. But that is really not the point of the present discussion.

Rather, let's consider what we learned after a full year of running in-service workshops. Here are some of the features of our in-service that worked well:

* It is essential that teachers of writing write. Certainly we expect the tennis coach to play tennis and the industrial arts person to tinker with machinery, but surprisingly, many teachers charged with teaching writing are not confident of their own writing ability. Maybe they wrote in high school or did very nice "A" papers in college, but since then, they may not sit down very often to compose.

* Teachers should understand the theoretical base for any teaching technique that seems to work. Otherwise, they are dealing in gimmicks and activities. They are technicians, not professionals. Here, a hook-up with a university is enormously helpful.

* Teachers are the most credible teachers of other teachers. CDWP in-service specialists arrive at the site of an in-service course and face their audiences after a full-day in the classroom. They understand and empathize with the classroom teacher's fatigue and frustration. Even so, they personify the idea that it is possible to grow professionally, even at 3:30.

* For reasons that aren't immediately fathomable, it seems you can't be a prophet in your own land. CDWP specialists do not coordinate programs in their own school districts and rarely do even short presentations.

* CDWP deliberately includes teachers from all levels, K-14 in both summer and in-service sessions. Although there is some resistance from participants, we sense that we all learn something about the developmental aspects of the writing process when we discuss problems with colleagues from other grade levels. The writing process seems to be the same for a first grader as it is for a professional writer, and we might as well capitalize on that similarity.

* As CDWP specialists met with participants from over fifteen schools in our area, a sense of community began to emerge. We have much to share with teachers from other school districts.

Earlier, I mentioned that the experiment was not entirely a glowing success. There is room for change and growth. Among some problems we discovered are:

* While it may be theoretically sound to conduct courses for teachers from all grade levels, it isn't always a comfortable situation. There are barriers that need to be broken down, and teachers need help seeing how a lesson designed for grade three will adapt to grade eleven, for example.

* Teachers from disciplines other than English and even administrators signed up for our courses, and we didn't have much specific help to offer them. We need to take a careful look at writing across the curriculum.

* There is a problem of fragmentation in a course that meets once a week. The experience is simply not as intense and perhaps not as effective as the total immersion experience of meeting every day for four weeks in the summer. In one case, a class was cancelled for three weeks in a row because of snow days. Participants barely recognized each other after the long hiatus.

* Although we designed our core units (see brochure) to mirror the writing process--pre-writing, organizing, editing, evaluating--we learned in follow-up evaluations that participants did not have a sense of the whole.

* It is hard work. Some teachers reported spending staggering numbers of hours producing the writing to share in groups.

* There are tacky little housekeeping duties that must be dispatched. Someone has to take attendance, see to the coffee, arrange a pleasant room, report to an administrator if in-service credit is to be awarded.

* In spite of our attempts to describe our course accurately in awareness sessions that preceded the course itself, some people reported that the course was not what they expected. The lesson here is that the communication process must be kept open with participants encouraged to feed back impressions even while the course is going on.

* And that raises the very thorny problem of evaluation, both on-going and final. Each presentation was evaluated on the spot and the evaluations passed on to the presenter to help him improve. In addition, we intend to return to each in-service site for follow-up evaluation. So far, teachers report that they are, in some cases,

using student writing groups in their own classes, that they are giving more and more varied writing assignments, that they feel more confident. But we do not yet have evidence that in the court of last resort, the student's writing performance, we have made any difference. We will be looking for ways to answer that question.

For whatever it's worth to teachers thinking about improving in-service offerings, these are the experiences, both positive and uncertain, of the Capital District Writing Project.

Lynn Quitman Troyka

TEACHING SENTENCE STRUCTURE WITHOUT GRAMMAR: SENTENCE COMBINING AND BEYOND

Lynn Quitman Troyka
Queensborough Community College
The City University of New York
Bayside, New York 11364

From a paragraph in a student's essay entitled, "The Dangers of Smoking"

One of the major dangers of smoking is the risk of emphysema. Emphysema is a deterioration of the lungs which develops over a period of years. People who have emphysema suffer from serious shortness of breath. They find it difficult to work, climb stairs, and even talk quickly, for example. Their lungs which have lost their elasticity cannot contract and force out stale air. Thus, these emphysema sufferers cannot breathe efficiently. Emphysema is more common in smokers over 50 years of age, but the disease starts to develop in youth. Although doctors can prescribe drugs, mild exercise, and special breathing routines, there is no cure for emphysema. In fact, it is often fatal because of the strain on the heart.

From a paragraph in a student's essay entitled "Machines in Our Modern World"

The home is another place where you can certainly find many types of modern machinery. Washing machines, electric can openers, and food blenders are good examples of the modern miracles that help people live more easily and comfortably in their homes. Also, there is the refrigerator. Although this fantastic food preserver just stands still and seems to be observing the passing scene in the family kitchen, it is a machine. Are you surprised? I was when I found out. You see, the motor in a refrigerator has moving parts and thus qualifies the entire refrigerator to be called a machine.

DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE, ACTIVITY NO. 1 -- DICTION

(Small case letters indicate typical occasions for students to ask questions.)

One of the major dangers of smoking is[a] the risk of emphysema. Emphysema is a deterioration of the lungs which develops[b] over a period of years. People who have emphysema suffer from serious shortness of breath.[c] They find it difficult to work, climb stairs,[d] and even talk quickly,[e] for example. Their lungs which have lost their elasticity cannot contract and force out stale air.[f] Thus,[g] these emphysema sufferers cannot breathe efficiently. Emphysema is more common in smokers over 50 years of age, but the disease starts to develop in youth. Although doctors can prescribe drugs, mild exercise,[h] and special breathing routines,[i] there is no cure for emphysema.[j] In fact,[k] it is often fatal because of the strain on the heart.

DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE, ACTIVITY NO. 2 -- "CONTROLLED COMPOSITION"

1. Recopy the paragraph but substitute "A person" for "people" in line 2.
2. Recopy the paragraph but substitute this sentence for the first sentence: "Before a cure was found for emphysema, it was one of the major risks that smokers faced."

DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE, ACTIVITY NO. 3 -- SENTENCE IMITATION

1. One of the major dangers of smoking is the risk of emphysema.

(a) One of the major _____ of _____ is the _____ of _____.

(b) _____ of the _____ _____ of _____ _____ the _____ of _____.

(c) _____

_____

(d) _____

_____

2. People who have emphysema suffer from serious shortness of breath.

(a) _____ who have _____ suffer from _____.

(b) _____ who _____ _____ _____ _____ _____.

(c) _____

_____

(d) _____

_____

3. Washing machines, electric can openers, and food blenders are good examples of the modern miracles that help people live more comfortably in their homes.

(a) _____, _____, and _____ are good examples of _____ that help people _____.

(b) _____, _____, and _____ are _____ examples of _____ that help people _____.

(c) _____

_____

_____

(d) _____

_____

_____

DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE, ACTIVITY NO. 4 -- SENTENCE COMBINING

1. Emphysema is a deterioration of the lungs.

The deterioration develops over a period of years. (which)

* Emphysema is a deterioration of the lungs <u>which</u> develops over a period of years. (1st para. lines 1-2)

(a) Love is a combination of feelings.

No one has been able to explain them logically. (which)

* _____

_____

(b) A person's education is a very personal possession.

It is one possession that cannot be taken away no matter what. (which)

* _____

_____

NOTE: Another example of this sentence structure occurs in the 1st para., lines 6-7.

2. People have emphysema. (who)

These people suffer from serious shortness of breath.

* People <u>who</u> have emphysema suffer from serious shortness of breath. (1st para. lines 2-3)

(a) Some people drive cars. (who)

Some of these people are "killers" behind the wheel.

* _____

_____

(b) Many people like to listen to music. (who)

They find it very soothing and comforting.

* _____

_____

NOTE: This sample sentence can be uncombined into three sentences, if desired: People have emphysema. These people suffer from shortness of breath. This shortness of breath is serious.

3. Doctors can prescribe drugs, mild exercise, and special breathing routines. (Although)

There is no cure for emphysema.

* <u>Although</u> doctors can prescribe drugs, mild exercise, and special breathing routines, there is no cure for emphysema. (1st. para. lines 7-8)

(a) Students like to get good grades. (Although)

Some students do not want to study hard.

* _____

_____

(b) Disco has become very popular recently. (Although)

Jazz still has its loyal fans.

* _____

_____

NOTE: This sample sentence can be uncombined into four sentences, if desired: Doctors can prescribe drugs. They can prescribe mild exercise. They can prescribe special breathing routines. There is no cure for emphysema.

BIBLIOGRAPHY Lynn Quitman Troyka

Teaching Sentence Structure Without Grammar: Sentence Combining and Beyond, New York State Education Department, May 24, 1979

Allen, Robert, et.al. Working Sentences. New York: Crowell, 1975.
A college-level text for teaching students SECTOR ANALYSIS. Excellent for teachers who want to teach themselves easily for quick application to the classroom at any level.

Cooper, Charles. "An Outline for Writing Sentence-Combining Problems." English Journal, January 1973.
A sequential program for teaching sentence combining. Easy-to-follow directions for teachers to use when writing their own materials for all levels. Assumes that sentence combining exercises derive from the sequence presented rather than from students' own paragraphs, but absolutely first-rate for helping teachers tackle the basics of sentence combining.

Christensen, Francis. Notes on a New Rhetoric, Second Edition. New York: Harper & Row, 1967, 1978.
Do not let the name of this book mislead, the book is a treasure for teachers who want to find out more about how sentences work. (The book is not about "rhetoric" in general.) This analysis leads to teaching not by combining kernels, but by adding to and modifying what a person has written. An absolute classic.

Elgin, Suzette Haden. A Primer of Transformational Grammar for Rank Beginners. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1975.
This 25-page booklet is friendly and accurate. The title tells all.

Troyka, Lynn Quitman and Jerrold Nudelman. Steps in Composition, Alternate Second Edition. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hill, 1972, 1979.
A upper-high school/two year college basic writing text with materials that can be adapted for the development teaching sequence.

c: 1979, Lynn Quitman Troyka, presentation on May 24, 1979, at the New York State Education Department conference on writing.

Improving Student Writing Through Sentence Combining

Thomas F. Callaghan,
East Aurora High School

Some Sentence Combining Texts

Daiker, D., Kerek, A., & Morenberg, M. The Writer Options: College Sentence Combining. New York: Harper & Row, 1979.

O'Hare, F. Sentencecraft: An Elective Course in Writing. Lexington, Massachusetts: Ginn & Company, 1975.

Strong, W. Sentence Combining and Paragraph Linking. Random House, in press.

Adjective Word and Phrase Embedding

The doctor healed the man.
The doctor was kindly.
The man had a broken leg.
(The kindly doctor healed the man with the broken leg.)

Adjective Clauses

The team is always looking for talent.
The team had a season last year. (which)
The season was undefeated.
The talent is new.
The talent is enthusiastic.
The talent might make the team stronger. (that)
(The team which had an undefeated season last year is always looking for new, enthusiastic talent that might make the team stronger.)

Adverb Clauses

The criminal escapes. (if)
The criminal is notorious.
The criminal escapes from jail.

The officials will be fired.
The officials will be fired for neglect.
(If the notorious criminal escapes from jail, the officials will be fired for neglect.)

Noun Phrases

SOMETHING was his goal in life.
He makes a million dollars. (to make)
(To make a million dollars was his goal in life.)

SOMETHING is not easy.
He gets good grades. (getting)
(Getting good grades is not easy.)

Sam was proud of SOMETHING.
He has swum the English Channel. (having)
(Sam was proud of having swum the English Channel.)

Noun Clauses

The new mayor said SOMETHING.
He was going to solve the water problem. (that)
(The new mayor said that he was going to solve the water problem.)

SOMETHING was a question.
She could endure these trials. (whether)
The trials were rigorous.
The question was nagging.
The question was nagging in Jody's mind.
(Whether she could endure these rigorous trials was a nagging question in Jody's mind.)

Absolute Phrases

The shark swam through the water.
Blood was dripping from his mouth. (ADD)
(The shark swam through the water, blood dripping from his mouth.)

John came home from school.
His mind was full of math problems. (ADD)
(John came home from school, his mind full of math problems.)

The police moved in on the house.
Some went to block the doors. (ADD)
Others went to examine the suspects. (ADD)
(The police moved in on the house, some to block the doors, others to examine the suspects.)

The duchess strode into the room.
Her eyes were like burning coals. (ADD)
(The duchess strode into the room, her eyes like burning coals.)

The duke approached the duchess.
His nose was pointing at the roof. (with, ADD)
(The duke approached the duchess, with his nose pointing at the roof.)

Participles

The ocean lay in front of him.
The ocean was crystal.
The ocean was clear.
It spread its blue waters in glory. (ADD)
It left him speechless. (ADD)
(The crystal clear ocean lay in front of him, spreading its blue waters in glory, leaving him speechless).

Reconstituted Paragraph

Grendel Attacks Hrothgar's Camp

So in the dark night Grendel crept toward Heorot Hall. He crept silently. He glided among the shadows. He was drooling with spit. He ws stinking. He was hairy. He leaped the outside walls. He stopped to listen. No one had heard him. Only the leaves rustled overhead. Then he rushed into the hall. He rushed with a scream. The scream was bloodcurdling. The hall was where the Danish warriors were sleeping. They were careless. They were carefree. They slumbered on their beds. They were heedless of how Grendel's scream tore them from their sleep. Before they could think he crashed through their midst. His claws were sunk deep in two warriors. Hurriedly he snatched up the others. He snatched up one or two at a time. He snatched them until he had slaughtered thirty. He slaughtered thirty of Hrothgar's strongest earls. He lurched from the hall. He lurched out after the whole group had awakened. He took flight. He left bodies strewn. He left bodies mangled. He left bodies partially eaten. He left bodies among the rushes on the floor.

T Unit Analysis (Loban, p. 117) Grade Twelve, Age Seventeen

Walking down the street one rainy saturday night we came upon a piculier sight a policeman giving a ticket to a woman who had jaywalked accross the street./ What a heated argument was going on,/ the woman whom I had never seen before was trying to convince the policeman of something,/ We could not make out exactly what they were saying,/so curious as we are, we crept up closer & closer. Step by step/ finally we could hear every word that they were saying./ She keep telling to policeman I had to jaywalk/ I thought I saw my sons rain boots in the street,/ there's no robbers in the middle of the street./ Even though the cop did see the slippers behind the woman he could not change his mind for he needed a 10% commission he would obtain from that sort of violation./ So he gave her the ticket but found out latter she was detective mores from the state police which conjure up the whole situation./

170 words / 11 T units = 15.5 words per T unit

(Loban, p. 119) Grade Seven, Age Twelve

It looks to me that they are fishing/ and ther our camping./ The Boy Just cast out his line./ The girl has had here line in the water fore a while/ and the other girl is bating hir line./

Afture theyr fished for a while they will take the fish home for dinner./

53 words / 6 T units = 8.8 words per T unit

References

Callaghan, T.F. The effects of sentence-combining exercises on the syntactic maturity, quality of writing, reading ability, and attitudes of ninth grade students. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, SUNY at Buffalo, 1977. (DAI, 78, 13980)

Christensen, F. Notes Toward A New Rhetoric. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

Christensen, F. The problem of defining a mature style. English Journal, 1968, 57, 572-579.

Combs, W.E. Further Implications and Effects of Sentence-Combining Exercises for the Secondary Language Arts Curriculum. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, the University of Minnesota, 1975. (DAI, 75, 1266A)

Hunt, K.W. Grammatical Structure Written at Three Grade Levels. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965.

Hunt, K.W. Syntactic Maturity in School Children and Adults. Monograph of the Society for Research in Child Development, 1970.

Loban W. Language Development: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1976.

Mellon, J.C. Transformational Sentence Combining: A Method for Enhancing the Development of Syntactic Fluency in English Composition. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1969.

Morenberg, M., Daiker, D., & Kerek, A. Sentence Combining at the College Level: An Experimental Study. Research in the Teaching of English, 1978, 12, 245-256.

O'Donnell, R.C., Griffin, W.J., & Norris, R.C. Syntax of Kindergarten and Elementary School Children: A Transformational Analysis. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967.

O'Hare, F. Sentence Combining: Improving Student Writing Without Formal Grammar Instruction. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1973.

Sullivan, M. The Effects of Sentence-Combining Exercise on Syntactic Maturity, Quality of Writing, Reading Ability, and Attitudes of Students in Grade Eleven. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, SUNY at Buffalo, 1978. (DAI, 78, 14240)

William H. Cullen

USING CHORAL READING TO PRACTICE COMPOSITION SKILLS

William H. Cullen, State University College at Potsdam

Choral reading is usually regarded as a literature activity in which people work closely together to achieve desired effects with language. But it also may motivate a writing class to understand better the importance of selected skills of the composing process. Such skills include identification of an intended effect and the importance of selecting, organizing, and apportioning material in a composition to achieve that effect. There is also strong motivation to strengthen the students' understanding of "speaker's voice" and their skills of word choice, sentence structure, and writing mechanics.

If students have already experienced choral reading for enjoyment, the teacher may easily encourage them to produce their own verses, following patterns and ideas given them. If a class is unfamiliar with choral reading, a teacher may introduce the students to speech choir techniques with verses that have an immediate appeal and that may be learned by rote. Almost always, rhythmic folk songs (spoken, of course, not sung), haiku, silly verses, and short lyric poems are suitable. Younger children like to learn new jump-rope rhymes. Intermediate children like the gruesome "Little Willy" stanzas. There are dozens of examples of haiku, cinquain, tanka, and the like for all grades. The important point to remember is to begin with short entertaining selections.

When the students seem ready to try writing and speaking some of their own creations, they might begin with creating impressions of a place well known to them. On the chalkboard write "McDonalds," or "Kiwanis Park," or "the bus ramp at the closing of school." Next ask the students to volunteer words and phrases to describe the scene and situation, calling upon their senses of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste to create vivid expressions. After 10-15 phrases have been listed, the class cooperatively selects those items from the list that help create a particular emphasis about the scene--its atmosphere or organized confusion, its beauty and peace, its contrasts of color and noise. At the same time, the students organize the items in a sensible way, adding necessary connecting words and other terms to achieve a unified free verse poem. The results are checked by the class to make certain there is a definite impression in the poem and that the mechanics of spelling, punctuation, phrasing and so on have been observed.

The final phase of this activity will be a choral reading by the class in which combinations of voices using various tones and dynamics carry out the intended effect of the poem. To follow-up the whole group activity, the class may be divided into small groups to write and choral read their own impressions of familiar places.

An advantage of using large or small groups is that the students work in a non-threatening atmosphere. They can learn from each other the need for carefully choosing words and phrases and organizational patterns to achieve some effect. And they can literally hear the voice implied in the written form of their works.

There are other writing activities that may combine with choral reading to help students practice compositional skills. From The English Teacher's Activities Handbook, written by Floyd L. Bergman and published in 1976 by Allyn and Bacon, Inc., comes this idea. The teacher writes the name of a color on the chalkboard. The students respond to the color with associated words and phrases. For each student's response, the teacher gives a word or phrase prompted by the student's word. This process continues until a list of 6-10 items has been accumulated. The composing process consists of combining the two lists of words or phrases into an impressionistic, free verse bearing the color as its title. Here is Bergman's illustration:

This	And This	Becomes This...
GREEN		
grass	cattle	Grass
carpet	hay	lush-green
cucumber	mow	cool
cool	peas	Spring
aroma	lush	aroma
beans	Spring	cattle-food

In this activity, as in the others, the students practice the skills of word-choice, selection and organization of details, and apportionment. Certainly, the matter of tone or point-of-view is given attention too.

The Poetry Kit, published by Scholastic Magazines, Inc., suggests some writing activities that can be used with choral reading experiences too. One of them makes use of "starter phrases."

Pick an interesting word that will "hold the poem together." Examples of such words might be a provocative color, the name of a familiar community, a sensory word like "Heard..." or the phrase "I remember..." List this word or phrase a half-dozen times in a vertical row on the chalkboard. The phrase now is viewed as a starter for a series of impressions contributed by the students. The following exemplifies the general idea:

Purple--glowering mountains ruling the valleys.
Purple--lilacs and iris announcing summer.
Purple--plum juice running down my chin.
Purple--vampire eye-shadow on my older sister.

Again, the students can choral read their selections and enjoy the results of their efforts.

Judith Kahn in The Guide to Conscious Communication published by Bantam Books, Inc., 1975, p. 49. describes a writing exercise that relies on synesthesia, the process of combining at least two of our senses to create an image. Ms. Kahns' model is from Basho:

As bell tones fade
Blossom scents take up the ringing
Evening shade!

The teacher will need to lead the students to see that three physical senses are exercised in this verse. To get the students ready to write somewhat comparable verses, warm them up with brief associations of sounds and smells, or colors and tactile impresssions (Red is hot; blue is cold; hot water is heavy; the horn blast of a luxury car is maroon, and so on), the students may next try adding on to starter phrases to produce a synesthetic haiku: "Darkness whispers" "sweet tasting moonlight" "A sawing locust."

Here is a final suggestion for a composition/choral reading activity, a bit messy, but fun. First collect a substantial pile of old newspapers until you have enough for each student to have at least two issues. On the day you wish to try this activity, have available a half-dozen pairs of scissors, a supply of paste or transparent tape, and a large pad of plain newsprint.

Begin the activity by asking the students to contribute expressions that seem to suggest the feelings of people about life, about their jobs, their activities, and so on. Words like "Yuk!", "Phooey!", "Yeccchh!" or perhaps "Hot-diggity-dog!", or "Yippee!" come to mind. Now explain to the students that by working in small groups of four or five and using any of the contributed expressions as titles, they will "find" poems in the newspapers to carry out the impression implied by any of the terms. Tell the students to pore through the newspapers, locating and tearing out appropriate headlines and large print words. About 10 minutes of searching should produce a sizeable collection in each group. The next step is to sort out the items according to the category they best fit in (All the "Yippee!" items go in one place; the "Yuk!" items in another place, and so on). About five items per title word are enough. The group next organizes the selected items into an effective arrangement.

While one student neatly trims the torn items, another students pastes or tapes each on a sheet of newsprint, bearing one of the title words. The rest of the group acts as an editorial staff or continues to look for additional items if necessary. Each small group should be able to produce and present at least two "found poems" in a class period. These verses, if they may be called such, make good choral reading exercises, requiring varieties of vocal effects so as to be consistent with the impression implied in the title.

All in all, the combination of writing and choral reading seems to provide an enjoyable and useful procedure for practicing essential composition skills.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bergman, Floyd L. The English Teacher's Activities Handbook, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976, p. 15.

Kahn, Judith. The Guide to Conscious Communication, New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1975, p. 49.

Scholastic Scope Magazine. Poetry, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1976, p. 15.

Choral Reading Workshop

OPERATING A WRITING SKILLS LABORATORY ON A LOW-OR NO-BUDGET

Susan L. Steiner, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

I. Rationale for writing skills laboratories at the secondary school level
   A. The nationwide crisis in composition
   B. Services offered/populations served
      1. Diagnosis of problems in grammar and composition through testing and conferencing
      2. Aid for students deficient in particular composition skills through small group and individual tutoring (More individualized attention possible in lab than in regular classroom)
      3. Aid for "special" students--disadvantaged, foreign, handicapped
      4. Aid for students and community members with special needs--research paper forms, etc.; a "Writers' Hotline"
      5. A referral service for all faculty members
      6. An advisory/research center for all teachers of writing
      7. A base for composition mini-courses and workshops
      8. A practicum for students (college) enrolled in a teaching of composition course and for student teachers

II. Organizing the writing skills lab
   A. Stages of the lab
      1. Initiation
      2. Expansion
      3. Formalization
   B. Sources of funding
   C. Physical setting and materials
      1. Establishing the desired atmosphere
      2. Room arrangements; sample plans
      3. Basic and not-so-basic instructional materials and equipment
   D. Staffing options and tutor training

III. Operating the writing skills lab
   A. Scheduling hours and appointments
   B. Record keeping (sample forms in handout accompanying presentation)
   C. Publicity
   D. Evaluation of services

IV. Model laboratory programs
   A. Stillwater (Minnesota) High School
   B. Stevens Point (Wisconsin) Area High School
   C. Programs planned or operating in New York State secondary schools (contributions from audience)

V. Bibliography and handout materials

Bibliography to accompany OPERATING A WRITING SKILLS LABORATORY ON A LOW-OR NO-BUDGET

BOOK:

Laque, Carol, and Sherwood, Phyllis. A Laboratory Approach to Writing. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977.

MAGAZINE:

Entire issue on "The Writing Laboratory." Wisconsin English Journal, January 1979.

ARTICLES:

Harris, Muriel. "Making the Writing Lab an Instructors' Resource Room." College Composition and Communication 28(December 1977): 376-78.

Luban, Nina; Matsuhashi, Ann; and Reigstad, Tom. "One-to-One to Write." The English Journal 67(November 1978): 30-35.

Sbaratta, Philip. "Teaching Composition in the Portable Writing Laboratory." College Composition and Communication 27(May 1976): 202-4.

Steward, Joyce. "To Like to Have Written: Learning the Laboratory Way." ADE (September 1975): 32-43.

UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL:

Doyle, M. L. "The High School Writing Laboratory: An Observation of the Stillwater, Minnesota, Writing Lab." Independent study report, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, 1979.

MICROFORM DOCUMENTS:

ERIC DOCUMENT SERVICE

ED 124 966 Structuring the Supplementary Writing Lab

ED 117 717 A Teaching Monograph: Co-Designed Lab Approach to Writing

58

THE EFFECT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON WRITING SKILLS OF SECONDARY STUDENTS

Marlene Caroselli, Rochester City Schools

Since the advent of the Coleman report in 1966, educators have become increasingly aware of the importance of the home environment upon a child's ability to learn. Subsequent studies have repeatedly demonstrated that the schools alone cannot offset the effect which socio-economic inequalities have upon the child's scholastic achievement. Certain of these inequalities or variables related to the child's success in school are fairly stable factors--the level of education achieved by parents, the family income, the number of adults in the home, and parental occupations, for example. There are, however, other variables within the home environment which can be influenced or altered more readily. This second type of variable is more social than economic in nature and involves a process or interaction which occurs between parent and child. Examples of such process variables, which can also have a powerful effect on children's learning, are: the amount of time a parent spends talking with the child, the extent of parental involvement with the school, the number of times the parent engages the child in school-related activities, et cetera.

Benjamin Bloom (1976:2) has observed that certain process variables are more important than static variables in developing affective and achievement characteristics: "What adults do in their interactions with children in the home is the major determinant of these characteristics rather than...status characteristics."

The importance of linking the home and school environments is recognized by a number of educational leaders, among them Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979:463) who asserts that the schools can no longer work in isolation, that "school people must build bridges to the rest of the community and to the parents."

This field study represents an attempt to build a bridge, connecting classroom instruction to home reinforcement. Writing assignments are distributed to students each week; these assignments are designed to reinforce the objectives of the classroom writing program. Accompanying these assignments each week is a separate checklist for parents, containing suggestions of ways in which parents can interact with their children while working with them on the writing assignments. These writing assignments and the companion parent worksheets are contained in the following pages.

It is hoped that this experience of working together on a common writing activity will increase the level of verbal interaction between parent and child: furthermore, it is anticipated that an increase in the quantity of this interaction will result in improved student writing and improved attitudes toward writing. The following selection from a student composition affords hope that these expectations can be realized.

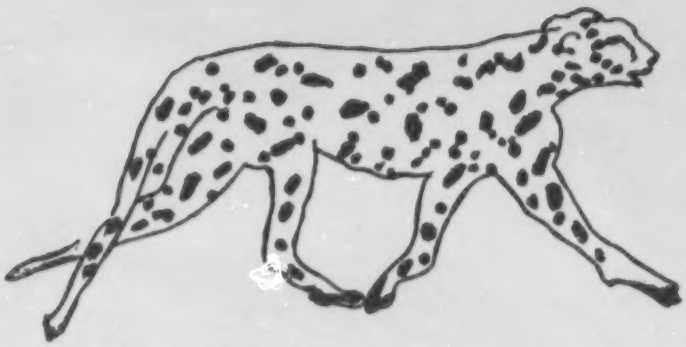
My mother and I read the assignment carefully together on the days she is off. We read the directions of that particular writing assignment and then my mother says, "This is the way to do it." And I say, "No, mama, this is the way." She tells me to read the directions again.

I enjoy doing the home writing assignments with my parent, because my mother and I get to be together often now. Before I started doing these writing assignments, she would just ask me if I had done my homework, and I would say, "Yes, mama." But it is a whole new different thing now, because both of us are learning things we did not know before.

REFERENCES

Bloom, Benjamin S. Human Characteristics and School Learning. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976.

Brandt, Ronald "On Families and Schools: A Conversation with Urie Bronfenbrenner." Educational Leadership, 1979, 36, 469-463.



Home Writing Assignment #1

Unit One: The Paragraph

PARENT'S CHECKLIST

Dear Parent,

Read over the Home Writing Assignment #1 with your son or daughter. Discuss which sentences do not belong in a paragraph about the cheetah being a powerful hunter. Your son or daughter should cross out those sentences. Then he or she should write the whole paragraph, using the sentences which are left.

The correct paragraph should look like this:

THE CHEETAH IS A POWERFUL HUNTER. THE CHEETAH PURSUES ANTELOPE WHICH IT LOCATES BY MEANS OF ITS KEEN EYESIGHT. IT ALSO OVERCOMES GAZELLES BY RUNNING THEM DOWN. FASTER EVEN THAN THE GREYHOUND, THE CHEETAH CAN REACH SPEEDS OF 63 MILES PER HOUR. LONG AGO, THE CHEETAH WAS USED AS A HUNTING ANIMAL IN ASIA.

Before your child turns the paragraph in to his or her English teacher, please look it over to see that:

1) The first word of the paragraph is indented.

2) There is a period at the end of each sentence.

3) Every sentence begins with a capital letter.

4) All words have been copied correctly from the assignment sheet.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Sincerely,

Marlene Barosetti

Home Writing Assignment #1
Unit One: The Paragraph

Name:_____

Date:_____

Most paragraphs contain more than one sentence. These sentences are all related to a central topic, or a main idea. The main idea sentence usually comes at the beginning of the paragraph, but sometimes it can be found in the middle or at the end of the paragraph. The other sentences give details to support the topic sentence.

Assignment: Here is a topic sentence for a paragraph about the cheetah: THE CHEETAH IS A POWERFUL HUNTER.

The following list of facts about the cheetah contains some sentences which do not belong in a paragraph about the cheetah being a powerful hunter. However, there are other sentences which do support or relate to the main idea: The Cheetah is a powerful hunter. You are to cross out those sentences which do not belong in the paragraph.

The cheetah does not roar, but instead makes an odd cry like the hiss of a cat.

The cheetah pursues antelope which it locates by means of its keen eyesight.

It also overcomes gazelles by running them down.

Like a cat, the cheetah purrs to show pleasure.

Faster even than the greyhound, the cheetah can reach speeds of 63 miles per hour.

Most cheetahs live about 16 years.

Long ago, the cheetah was used as a hunting animal in Asia.

Now, write a paragraph using the topic sentence first. The other sentences will be the ones which were not crossed out.

Home Writing Assignment #2
Unit One: The Paragraph

PARENT'S CHECKLIST

Dear Parent,

Read over the Home Writing Assignment #2 with your son or daughter. The first paragraph is a review of the central focus in a piece of writing. The students have been learning about central focus in their English class. The central focus generally tells what the piece of writing is all about. Supporting details are used to give examples of, or to explain the focus further. Sometimes that focus is expressed in a single sentence (usually at the beginning of the paragraph). That sentence is called the topic sentence or the main idea.

By the way, the paragraph about Ranger Sullivan is a true story! I hope you enjoy reading about his "magnetic personality."

ANSWER KEY

1. The central focus of this paragraph is (b) Roy Sullivan has been struck by lightning five times. Sentence (b) gives us a good idea of what the paragraph is generally discussing. The first sentence (Scientists cannot explain why lightning strikes human beings.) does not summarize the paragraph at all. Nothing in the paragraph mentions scientists. This is also true for the last sentence (Having your hair set on fire could be dangerous.). This is a true statement, but it has nothing to do with the paragraph. Sentence (b) is the only choice.
2. "The first time he was struck, he lost his big toe nail." This sentence is (c) a supporting detail, because it explains or gives an example of the central focus.
3. "Sullivan has been struck by lightning five times and has lived to tell about it!" is (a) the topic sentence. Notice it comes near the beginning of the paragraph and it expresses the central focus.

Home Writing Assignment #2/Unit One: The Paragraph

Name_____

Date_____

Remember that the central focus of a piece of writing includes all the details, but does not go beyond them. Details support the central focus. The central focus is often expressed as the topic sentence of a paragraph; the topic sentence usually occurs at the beginning of a paragraph.

Assignment: Read the following paragraph carefully. Then answer the questions which follow by underlining the best response.

Usually, when we say someone has a "magnetic personality," we mean that he or she is charming and attracts other people. Park Ranger Roy Sullivan is really magnetic, but he attracts lightning, not people! Sullivan has been struck by lightning five times and has lived to tell about it. The first time he was struck, he lost his big toe nail. The second time, he lost his eyebrows. His left shoulder was burned the next time, On the fourth occasion, his hair caught on fire. The last time, lightning struck him in the head and knocked him ten feet out of his car. No one has been able to explain Sullivan's rare magnetism.

---

1. The central focus of this paragraph is:

   a. Scientists cannot explain why lightning strikes human beings.
   b. Roy Sullivan has been struck by lightning five times.
   c. Having your hair set on fire could be dangerous.

2. "The first time he was struck, he lost his big toe nail."

   a. This sentence is the topic sentence.
   b. This sentence is the central focus.
   c. This sentence is a supporting detail.
   d. This sentence is going beyond what the passage says.

3. "Sullivan has been struck by lightning five times and has lived to tell about it."

   a. This sentence is the topic sentence.
   b. This sentence is the central focus.
   c. This sentence is a supporting detail.
   d. This sentence is going beyond what the passage says.

Nedra Stimpfle
Education Department
Skidmore College
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

"Approaches for Teaching Composition in the Elementary School"

presented at the New York State Education Department Conference Competency Testing and Beyond: Improving Student Writing on May 25, 1979

I. Folklore Hunt
   A. whole group involvement
   B. handouts
      1. "Folklore includes..."
      2. "Folklore cannot survive..."
      3. "Folklorists generally associate..."

II. Rogerian Listening and Writing
   A. pairs and trios
   B. speaking, listening and then recording folklore
      1. family custom or tradition
      2. home cure or remedy

III. Gravestone Writings
   A. small groups
   B. writing in response to questions about information on gravestones

IV. Sentence generated by using letters of name
   A. individual activity
   B. create variety of sentences using letters of name to begin words e.g. NEDRA - Ninety elephants danced riotously around.
   C. handouts
      1. letters to create words
      2. words to create sentences

V. Expansion of vocabulary and description
   A. whole group and then individual
   B. create more specific words/description for general words in sentence "A man went into the building e.g. "The old drunk staggered into the tavern."

VI. Varied Sentences
   A. whole group, acting out
   B. rearrange words in sentences to write a variety of sentence patterns.

VII. Writing about plants
   A. small groups
   B. writing in response to pictures of plants and instructions
      1. Name each plant. Explain the origin of one of the names.
      2. Describe the natural surroundings of the plant. Where would it grow?
      3. Describe the owner of the plant.
      4. Describe each plant using all the senses.
      5. Choose a plant that looks like you and explain why.
      6. Combine two plants and describe the hybrid.
      7. Describe the specific care the plant would need.

1. Find someone who has a nickname and write it here._____

2. Ask someone what brings him/her good luck. Write the answer here._____

3. Collect from someone a cure for hiccups._____

4. Collect another cure for hiccups._____

5. Ask someone to answer the riddle. _____

6. Ask someone to sign your autograph book. _____

7. Ask someone to describe his/her favorite clothing._____

8. Collect a jump rope rhyme._____

9. Ask someone how to predict the weather._____

10. Ask someone to demonstrate a gesture that conveys an idea. Describe it._____

11. Collect a personal superstition from someone._____

12. Collect an answer to a riddle. _____

13. Collect a cure for a cold._____

14. Ask someone what brings bad luck._____

15. Collect a counting out rhyme._____

16. Ask someone what his/her favorite food is. Write it here._____

17. Collect a cure for arthritis._____
_____

18. Ask someone for an example of a favorite saying, a word or phrase that he/she says a lot._____

GARRET WALSH

DIED

June 29, 1856.

AE. 45 yrs.

Native of Limerick Parish of

Donoughmere, Ireland.

May he rest in peace. Amen.

Explain why and how Garret Walsh came to Saratoga Springs, N.Y. from Ireland.

In Memory of

ANN MITILDA HUNTINGTON

Relict of

ROLLIN HUNTINGTON

and Daughter of

ABRAHAM & MATILDA

COX.

Died Aug. 24, 1899.

AE 54 Ys 6 Ms & 22 Ds

She endured the trials of this life
with patience and fortitude and
laboured for the welfare of others
and died in the firm faith and hope
of a blessed immortality beyond the grave.

In what way do you think Ann Matilda Huntington "laboured for the welfare of others?"

Stephen Dexter
Died
April 7, 1869.
Aged
71 yrs. 6 mos.
Father.

Phebe Ann
wife of
STEPHEN DEXTER
Died
April 8, 1866.
58 yrs. 8 mos.
Mother.

ELIZA A.
wife of
JAMES S. DEXTER.
Died
Mar. 23, 1860.
In her 27th yr.

JAMES S. DEXTER
son of
STEPHEN & PHEBE ANN
DEXTER,
Died
Oct. 1854.
AE 22 yr. & 9 m.

ELIZABETH
daughter of
STEPHEN & PHEBE ANN

WILLIAM E. DEXTER
son of
STEPHEN DEXTER
and
PHEBE ANN BARTOW
Dec. 13, 1846.
Aug. 1, 1916.

MARY G. GILBERT.
wife of
WILLIAM E. DEXTER
Died
Aug. 23, 1875.
AE 23 yrs.

EMMA J. WHITE.
wife of
W. E. DEXTER.
Jan. 16, 1850.
Apr. 13, 1915.

GERTIE
Daughter of
W. H. & M. L.
GROESBECK.
Died
Nov. 17, 1873
AE 14 yrs.

THOMAS J. M. DEXTER
June 27, 1844.
Feb. 29, 1891.

W. H. GROESBECK
1834-1908
MARION L. DEXTER
HIS WIFE
Z 1840-1903

Explain how all of these people are related.

JAMES F. PLINKET

CO. D. 30 N.Y. Vol.

KILLED AT THE BATTLE

OF SOUTH MOUNTAIN

Sept. 14, 1862.

Victim of the War of

1861-65.

Describe what James Plinket's life would have been like if he had lived to old age.

Where would he have lived?

What work would he have done?

Would he have had a family?

The Grave

of

Mrs. Hannah C. Streeter.

Born in

Easton. Washington Co.

June 7, 1806.

Died at Saratoga Springs.

May 16, 1866.

There were no other family gravestones around Hannah Streeter.

Explain why she became separated from her family.

CHARLOTTE
daughter of
Thomas & Martha
KINNAIRD
born
March 14, 1851
died
Nov. 22, 1858

JAMES C.
son of
Thomas & Martha
KINNAIRD
born
Nov. 19, 1856
died
Aug. 8, 1858

Why did the sister and brother die only three months apart?

Write a paragraph explaining the situation surrounding their deaths.

TO THE MEMORY OF
A KIND FATHER
SIMON H. BARRETT
Born
Sept. 10, 1810
Died
July 9, 1865.

What kind of a person do you think Simon Barrett was?

Write a character sketch of him.

81

AUSTIN FULLER.

Born

at Westminster, VT.

April 13th 1792.

Died

Sept. 29th. 1870

His Wife

BETSY MAYNARD.

Born

at Bakersfield, VT.

Jan. 13th, 1793.

Died

Aug. 24th. 1878.

Describe the way in which Austin Fuller and Betsy Maynard met each other.

from The Study of Folklore by Alan Dundes:

. . . . . .Folklore includes myths, legends, folktales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, curses, oaths, insults, retorts, taunts, teases, toasts, tongue-twisters, and greeting and leave-taking formulas (e.g., See you later, alligator). It also includes folk costume, folk dance, folk drama (and mime), folk art, folk belief (or superstition), folk medicine, folk instrumental music (e.g. fiddle tunes), folksongs (e.g. lullabies, ballads), folk speech (e.g. slang), folk similes (e.g., as blind as a bat), folk metaphors (e.g., to paint the town red), and names (e.g., nicknames and place names). Folk poetry ranges from oral epics to autograph-book verse, epitaphs, latrinalia (writings on walls of public bathroons), limericks, ball-bouncing rhymes, jump rope rhymes, finger and toe rhymes, dangling rhymes (to bounce children on the knee), counting-out rhymes (to determine who will be "it" in games), and nursery rhymes. The list of folklore forms also contains games; gestures; symbols; prayers (e.g. graces); practical jokes; folk etymologies; food recipes; quilt and embroidery designs; house, barn, and fence types; street vendor's cries; and even the traditional conventional sounds used to summon animals or to give them commands. There are such minor forms as mnemonic devices (e.g., the name Roy G. Biv to remember the colors of the spectrum in order), sealers (e.g., SWAK -Sealed With a Kiss), and the traditional comments made after body emissions (e.g., after burps or sneezes). There are such major forms as festivals and special day (or holiday) customs (e.g., Christmas, Halloween, and birthdays).

from Folklore in America by Tristam P. Coffin and Hennig Cohens, eds.

Folklore cannot survive in a set form. Folklore continually changes, varying and developing, because it is shaped by the memories, creative talents, and immediate needs of human beings in particular situations. This process, the process of oral variation, is the lifeblood of folklore. When it is halted by printing or recording, folklore enters a state of suspended animation. It comes alive again only when it flows back into oral circulation.

from The Study of American Folklore by Jan Brunvand

Folklorists generally associate five qualities with true folklore: (1) it is oral; (2) it is traditional; (3) it exists in different versions; (4) it is usually anonymous; (5) it tends to become formularized. Each of these terms is used in a fairly broad sense, and the first three qualities are the primary ones to be considered in arriving at a definition. (p. 4)

Generally speaking, then, folklore may be defined as those materials in culture that circulate traditionally among members of any group in different versions, whether in oral form or by means of customary example. It is well to qualify the definition further only by adding that in anthropological studies of non-literate cultures, where everything is transmitted orally, the term "folklore" is generally used only for the "verbal arts" of song, story, riddle, proverb, and the like. (p. 5)

A more functional concept that has grown out of recent collecting is that of the theory of recognizing "folk group." Rather than defining such groups in terms of social, political, or geographical factors, they may be identified for folklore purposes first by their distinctive folk speech and other traditions--the lingo and lore which set one group apart from others. (p. 21)

These examples suggest four major kinds of American folk groups--occupational groups, age groups, regional groups, and ethnic or nationality groups. Sometimes it is also possible to distinguish folk groups that are set apart by religion, education, hobbies, neighborhood, or even family. Viewed from this point of view, it is clear that folk groups need not be composed only of hillbillies, and that a person may also belong to several folk groups at the same time. (pgs. 21-22)

The first test of a folk group is the existence of shared folklore; then the background of the conformity can be investigated. (p. 22)

DICTIONARY

1. One person in the group takes the dictionary and finds a word that no one knows the meaning of.

2. Each member of the group writes the word at the top of a small piece of paper and his name at the bottom of the paper.

3. The person with the dictionary writes the correct definition on a piece of paper. (It can be a shortened version.)

4. Others in the group make up a definition which sounds plausible.

5. All definitions are passed to the person with the dictionary.

6. All definitions should be read aloud once. The second time they are read all members of the group except the person with the dictionary vote for the definition they think is the correct one.

7. The person with the dictionary reads the correct definition and helps tally the points.

8 Scoring: 3 points for guessing the corect definition.
1 point for each person who chose your definition as the correct one.

9. Another person in the groups takes the dictionary . . .

Conference Workshop

WRITING: THE BIG TURN ON

Patricia Fritschler
Chappaqua Public Schools

I. Turned On - What Is It?

   A. Children that are excited

   B. Writing - anywhere - everywhere - about anything -everything

II. How They Got Turned On

   A. Start with the child
      I - Poetry (Emily Dickinson's I'm Nobody as a lead in discussion)

   B. Super Hero Theme
      Take a photograph of each child in costume for the front cover

   C. Make It Timely
      1. The World Series
      2. Casey "Reggie" at the Bat

   D. World of Imagination
      Open the door and let it fly as far as it can go!

   E. New Ways of Thinking
      1. Making comparisons
      2. Compressed conflict
      3. Be the thing

III. Don't Isolate - Relate to Subject Matter

   A. Social Studies

   B. Science

   C. Math

   D. Reading

IV. Arts and Projects Please!

   A. Use color

   B. Print - any size - any direction

   C. Illustrate

   D. Design maps and charts for new worlds

E. Projects galore
   1. Stuffed things - dioramas
   2. Shadow boxes - carved creations
   3. Embroidered hangings

F. Dress up

G. Act out

V. The Red Pencil - Go Easy

A. Check a few skills at a time

B. Spelling

C. Recopying

D. Proofreading - the teacher - the student

VI. An Atmosphere for Writers

A. Warm

B. Accepting

C. Free - to dream - to create - to express - to write!

POETRY - THEY DARE TO SPEAK OUT

I. Poetry - A Mode for Self-Expression

A. Motivation

B. Discussion

C. Climate of acceptance and freedom

II. Beautiful Thoughts

POETRY

1. I - This is a subject close to a child's heart. A warm and accepting atmosphere will encourgage him to feel free to talk about himself and express his thoughts and desires. (Emily Dickinson's I'm Nobody makes an interesting discussion warm up.)

2. Baseball Poetry - Casey at the Bat was interesting to lead in to Reggie Jackson's famous strike-out this past fall.

3. Anything that's happening in the world-community makes a good poetry topic.

4. Holidays - Halloween, Valentine's Day, etc.

5. Color - Red is .....
   Reading Hailstones and Halibut Bones is an excellent lead-in.

6. The Ocean - Lovely, descriptive poetry

7. Eskimo Poetry

LONG TERM ASSIGNMENT

Imaginary Continent

I. How named

II. Location

III. Place in Time

IV. History

V. Description

- A. Size
- B. Shape
- C. Terrain
- D. Climate
- E. Elevation
- F. Rainfall

VI. Political Divisions

- A. Capitals
- B. Major cities
- C. Major industries

VII. People

- A. Description
- B. Language
- C. Homes
- D. Modes of travel
- E. Occupations
- F. Vacations
- G. Forms of recreation

VIII. Educational System

- A. Primary

B. Secondary

C. Higher Education

IX. System of Government

X. Religions on the Continent

XI. Numerical System

XII. Calendar

XIII. Sports

XIV. Arts

A. Music

B. Theatre

C. Paintings

D. T.V.

XV. Famous Heroes

XVI. Diseases and their Cures

XVII. Famous Holidays

XVIII. Alphabet

Project

Prepare a map of your continent. It must have a key, a scale of miles and directions.

Your report may include pictures, charts, smaller maps, and graphs.

Your cover should contain the name of your continent, a picture representing something about your continent, and your name.

COMPRESSED CONFLICT

Compressed Conflict is a two-word comparison that sums up two conflicting natures of an object or idea. For example, a Compressed Conflict of a fire might be LIFE-SAVING DESTROYER. On the one hand, a fire is a LIFE-SAVER to a man trapped in a blizzard. It is his only way of keeping warm. On the other hand, as the fire burns it DESTROYS the wood that feeds it. The description LIFE-SAVING DESTROYER sums up two different and opposing things about a fire. These words seem to "fight" each other, because how could <u>one</u> thing be both a LIFE SAVER and a DESTROYER?

One special thing about Compressed Conflict is that they might describe more than one thing. For example, a thunderstorm is also a LIFE-SAVING DESTROYER because it "destroys" a picnic but "saves the life" of the crops. Use your imagination to find examples for the following Compressed Conflicts.

<u>DELICATE ARMOR</u> describes

_____

because _____

_____

_____

FROZEN HASTE describes what one thing?

_____

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

A _____ is

an example of <u>DISCIPLINED FREEDOM</u>

because _____

_____

_____

_____

90

A _____ is

PRECIOUS WORTHLESSNESS because

_____

_____

_____

_____

An example of PLEASING PAIN is

_____

because _____

_____

_____

_____

An example of REPULSIVE ATTRACTION is

_____

because _____

_____

_____

_____

BE THE THING

Now you will use your imagination to BE THE THING. To BE THE THING you must pretend you are that Thing. You must imagine how it would feel to be that Thing and how you would act if you were that Thing. "That Thing" could be as lively as a fish or as dead as a fish bowl.

Have you ever noticed a tropical fish in a small glass tank? It swims round and round. How would you feel if you were that fish? BE THE THING! BE a fish in a small, round aquarium. Describe how you feel.

I have everything I need - fresh water and food - but I'm still in prison. When I was tiny, the tank seemed as big as a lake. Now that I have grown big, it is like a prison cell. What if I keep on growing?

In this sample, the writer, imagining himself as a fish in a tank, feels imprisoned and trapped. So far, he has no solution to his predicament. He has described one half of how to BE THE THING. Let's see what he does for the other half.

Imagine that you are a fish in a tank. What do you do, or try to do, to help yourself?

I look through my glass tank and interest myself in what's going on in the room. Also, I do special exercises. I don't just swim around. I do fish setting-up exercises. I swim in place. I do fin stands. I do deep tail bends.

Notice that what the writer does in this second part is a solution to the feelings he expressed in the first part. This is the best way to develop a BE THE THING response that will intrigue you.

Now try BEING THE THING on your own. BE a fish in a tank! Describe how you feel and what you do.

Making It Strange 4 - Harper & Row, Publishers

Creative Writing

1.	Which is quicker?	Yellow or Black?
2.	Which is sweeter?	Rain or July?
3.	Which is louder?	A smile - A frown?
4.	Which is angrier?	the KITCHEN - the LIVING ROOM
5.	Which is louder?	going to sleep - waking
6.	Which is more expensive?	- a long word like affectionate - a short word like kind
7.	Which takes up more space?	A PICKLE OR A PAIN?
8.	Which weighs more?	A COUGH OR A FROWN?
9.	Which is thinner?	DAY OR NIGHT?
10.	Which weighs more?	ZERO or ONE?
11.	Which is heavier?	A MOUNTAIN or AN OCEAN?
12.	Which is rougher?	YELLOW or PURPLE?

IDEAS THAT "TURN ON"

1. Super Hero - Become a "Super Hero" in any sport you particularly like. Write your autobiography and tell how you became famous.

2. You are a baseball being used in the World Series. What happens to you? Write a story telling about your World Series adventures.

3. Imaginary Continent - Create your own world. Design you own form of government, educational system, homes, furnishings, sports, religions, modes of transportation, famous heroes, diseases and their cures. Include maps, pictures, and charts.

4. You are a piece of pink bubble gum. Write a story of your adventures from the beginning to the end!

5. Night Watchman - Imagine you are a night watchman in a large apartment house. You lead a very pleasant life. After you have completed your rounds you settle down in a cozy, over-stuffed chair by the furnace and watch the late-late shows on T.V. One evening your whole world seems to come to an end. The television set is broken and you have read the only book in the basement. You start to poke aimlessly around the basement when all of a sudden you discover a large wooden box containing these items: one sweater, one bag of nuts, one old tricycle, one baseball bat, one box of 12 rubber canning jar lids, one tennis racquet without any strings, one fishing pole and reel, one baseball cap, one toolchest with nails, a hammer, a screwdriver, nuts and bolts, six marbles, one needle and some thread.

   The watchman spent the next few hours very busily making and inventing things. Using only the items in the box, what would you make? (Invitations to Thinking and Doing - Perceptive Publishing Company)

6. Hula Hoops -- Oops! - Imagine you are a sporting goods dealer in a large city, and one day when you are taking inventory you discover 200 hula hoops in the basement of your store. There hasn't been a hula hoop sold in your store for three years, and you wonder what you can possibly do with them. What ideas do you have about how the hula hoops can be used or sold so that they won't be a total loss? Write a story, telling all about them. (Invitation to Thinking and Doing - Perceptive Publishing Company)

7. Iceberg Caper - Suppose the scheme for supplying the city of Los Angeles with drinking water by floating an iceberg from Antartica was put into operation? Imagine what sorts of problems might have to be overcome once the huge iceberg reached Los Angeles. Using your imagination and whatever research books you need, answer the dilemma and create a story.

8. Design your own factory. Place it somewhere in Canada. Discuss your thinking processes as to why you placed it where you did, keeping in mind sources of energy, raw materials, employees, modes of transportation, means of selling and exporting goods, living conditions and recreational facilities of the area.

9. Write and illustrate a mystery story.

10. Have a contest! Story or poetry - either or both will generate a lot of excitement.

11. If you write letters, make them friendly and business letters to real people and business concerns.

12. Zero is Better Than Nothing - Write a story in which ZERO is being chased. Tell why ZERO is being chased and describe the many things whose form ZERO takes to elude his pursuers. How many things can ZERO be? Tell how ZERO makes himself look like other things.

13. Zero Fun - As ZERO you have specific uses and a unique shape. Here are some of the ways you are used: In the number "101" you are a place holder. In the problem "one minus one equals?" you are also the answer, "ZERO." Even when you are an important answer, you still amount to nothing. Write a story about being ZERO. ZERO times 100 equals ZERO. ZERO plus 100 equals 100. By sneaking yourself into places, you can play arithmetic jokes. Tell about the jokes you play. (Making It Strange 4 - Harper & Row, Publishers)

MAKING COMPARISONS

Comparisons help you to use your imagination to see the world in a new way. Also, comparisons can make strange and unfamiliar objects seem real and understandable.

1. A CALENDAR is like a MIRROR because _____

_____

2. A SANDWICH is like a _____ because _____

_____

3. A PRINTING PRESS is like WHAT ANIMAL? WHY? _____

_____

4. _____ is like a SOAP BUBBLE because _____

_____

5. With what can you compare GLUE? Explain. _____

_____

6. A MAGNET is like FISHING BAIT because _____

_____

(Making It Strange 3 - Harper & Row, Publishers)

Writing: The Big Turn On

Large-Volume Writing

Robert Warde
Westorchard Elementary School
Chappaqua, New York

I. Why?
- A. The techniques described here are self-motivating for children. They may be used by any teacher, at any grade level as a basic structure for a classroom writing program. Any themes and/or motivating techniques may be added to this basic structure to further inspire the children.
- B. "Learn by doing!"
- C. "Red-pencil-itis" may be avoided in a large-volume writing program because the teacher may zero in on just one or two skills in each composition submitted by the child. The teacher knows that many such compositions will be submitted which additional skills will be emphasized.
- D. The task of writing presents a great mental hurdle for some children. The techniques presented here are often a great help in getting children over this hurdle.

II. How?

Large volume writing functions with the following general principles:
- A. Free expression - the children are free to choose their own writing topics.
- B. The thrill of being published - much of their work is published for all their classmates and others to see.
- C. The teacher writes along with the children.
- D. Private thoughts - the children have the opportunity to write their private feelings without fear of their writing being read by the teacher.

III. What?
- A. Private Journal
  1. A notebook kept by the children in which a certain number of pages are dated each week by the teacher. These pages are to be filled by each child in any fashion he or she chooses but are not read by the teacher unless at the invitation of the child. See accompanying hand-out "How I Can Use My Journal."
  2. The journal is used as a resource book by each child. Writing rules and other helpful hints are stored there.
  3. A full description of this technique may be found in Hooked On Books by Daniel Fader, et al.

- B. "Storybook"
  1. Several stories or poems that each child writes are printed by mimeo each week and compiled into a class storybook. Every student in the class receives a copy of every page.
  2. The subjects or themes about which the children write are primarily a matter of free choice, with only occasionally assigned topics.
  3. The writing of the students is proof-read by the teacher and edited for spelling mistakes, punctuation errors, and capitalization errors. A list of spelling errors is given to each child for his or her individualized

spelling program. Students are only occasionally asked to make second drafts; for example, when it is obvious that a story represents a very poor effort.

4. The pages are read out loud in class with no child reading his or her own work. It is valuable for them to hear another child interpret their work orally.
5. After a story or poem is read orally, the teacher can drill the class on grammar contained therein, with such questions as "Why is there a comma after boy in the third line of the second paragraph?" or "Why is there an apostrophe in Stephen's?"
6. Intermediate grade children can have their stories printed in script (cursive) handwriting, thus giving them practice in reading such letters.
7. To decrease the time spent printing the pages, the students' writing may be thermofaxed directly into a ditto master if their handwriting is legible and their work has been proof-read and edited by the teacher or by the students themselves.
8. The common cry "I don't know what to write about!" practically disappears because the students receive a multitude of ideas from each other.
9. Stand back and watch the kids' faces light up when they see their words in print! They will write as many stories as you can handle, probably more!

C. Class Newsletter

1. Simulate a newsroom in the classroom, with an editor-in-chief's desk, assistant editors' desks, copy-persons, etc. List with the students all the important "news" stories that have to be "covered," such as special class projects, class trips, school events, etc. Once students volunteer to write about these topics, all other topics are entirely up to the students to choose.
2. Choose students who really know their proof-reading skills (and who could handle the human relations demands) as editors. They must proof-read all first drafts, offer suggestions on how to cover the topics fully, and ultimately decide which stories will go where in the newsletter. Of course, the teacher is always close by to assist the editors, but not any more than is absolutely necessary because half the fun is making it really "their" newsletter. The insights gained by the students about the cooperation and teamwork required to produce a high-quality newsletter are very valuable.
3. The students will come up with all sorts of crazy features, such as Dear Abby, puzzles, mazes, sports quizzes, etc.
4. Print enough copies to distribute some around the school. The kids love to show off!
5. Publish on a regular basis so the kids can look forward to the next issue and keep their ideas fresh and not lose the momentum of the excitement of Deadline Day! Once per month might be a possible time framework for regular publication.
6. Try to include every child's work in every issue to that they all can make a contribution. It's truly a group effort.

How I Can Use My Journal*

1. STORIES
2. POEMS
3. DIARY
4. ILLUSTRATIONS
5. CARTOONS
6. SONG LYRICS
7. SURVEYS
8. JOKES
9. REMINDERS
10. PLAYS
11. REPORTS
12. HANDWRITING PRACTICE
13. SECRETS
14. CODES
15. GAMES
16. QUOTATIONS (SAYINGS)
17. LISTS

*Compiled by a 4th grade class in September

Writing: The Big Turn On

Phyllis Bellofatto
D. G. Grafflin School
Chappaqua, New York
5th Grade

I. Introduction

A. The intermediate age youngster wants to write about . . .
1. Real life situations
2. World problems and possible solutions
3. Feelings and values
4. Opinions
5. The future
6. Humor

B. Several categories of writing
1. Basically the ability to communicate facts, ideas and opinions in written form - accurately
2. Creative Writing
3. Expressive Writing (Feelings & Values)

II. The Teaching of Writing Skills

A. Analyze children's work
1. First day of school
2. Checklist of skills needed

B. Teaching skills
1. Teach one skill at a time
2. Use varied methods
3. Weehawken Manual

C. Build writing skills expectations for grade level

D. Chappaqua: Writing Skills Program

E. Evaluation
1. Proofreading techniques
2. Reading work to class
3. Copying work on board or overhead
4. Proofreading each other's papers
5. Recopy certain papers
6. Have students analyze each paper only for stated objectives

III Ideas for Non-Creative Writing

A. Autobiography (outline given to students)

B. Classmate's Biography

C. Daily writing experience - various topics mainly about the child and his world

D. Report Writing
   1. Reading
   2. Selecting important facts
   3. Note taking - paraphrasing
   4. Formation of topic sentence
   5. Paragraphing
   6. Outlining

E. Current Events
   1. News summary
   2. Editorial
   3. Newspaper

F. Summaries of films, assembly programs, social studies or science topic
   1. Discussion
   2. Note taking as a group
   3. List vocabulary words or ideas
   4. Form topic sentence
   5. Children are ready to write

G. Reading and Writing
   1. Book Reports
   2. Summary of chapter
   3. Write about character
   4. Write about plot

H. Letter Writing
   1. Trips
   2. Thank you

I. Diary

IV. Important Aspect of Teaching to Communicate Thoughts in Writing

A. All skills must be taught - practice alone is not enough

B. Discuss before we write

C. Take notes or write down words only

D. Teach proofreading techniques

E. Share as much as possible

V. Creative Writing

A. Important techniques
   1. Presentation
   2. Topics or themes
   3. Time to create
   4. Freedom
   5. Share

VI. Topics That Have Worked For Me

A. Future Stories
   1. "2068" - When I'm 100 Years Old
   2. Future newspaper
   3. Future city

B. Social Studies
   1. Historical event - "I Was There . . ."
   2. 8th Continent

C. Holidays
   1. Why Friday the 13th is Unlucky
   2. My New Year's Resolutions

D. Tales about Nature
   1. Just So Stories
   2. Anasi the Spider

E. Not True
   1. Fake book report
   2. Fantasy diary

VII. Feelings and Values

A. Feelings
   1. Poetry - "House Fear" by Robert Frost - write a fear
   2. Films - Loneliness
      Worry
      Write own experiences, thoughts
   3. "What Makes Me Feel This Way?" - Eda Le Shau

B. Values
   1. Film - discuss
      Ask: What is important to you?

<u>BE A BOOK BUG!</u>

1. Make an oral report to class or teacher.
2. Make a written book report. See suggestions.
3. Make a series of cartoons about your book.
4. Make an oral or written report about the author.
5. Create a new cover for your book.
6. Create a diorama.
7. Dramatize a scene or an important character.
8. Write a movie script to sell your book to Hollywood.
9. Create a poster advertising the book.
10. Read orally an interesting part, stopping at an exciting part.
11. Design costumes for book characters for movie version.
12. Write a letter to a friend telling what you liked about the book.
13. Write or tell a new ending for the story.
14. Write a new adventure for the main character in your book.
15. Make a scrapbook showing new information you have learned.

16. Do an illustration for the book.
17. If it is a science book, plan a demonstration of what you have learned.
18. After reading a book of poems, learn a verse, or read one to the class.
19. Compose a telegram trying to give the essence of the book in 100 words.

RETELL A FAIRY TALE

Suggestions:

The wolf tells the real story about Little Red Riding Hood.
The wolf tells how the three pigs ruined his life.
Goldilocks tells her story.
The step-sisters tell about Cinderella.
The witch accuses Hansel and Gretel of unkind treatment.
The Gingerbread Boy says, "I won't make the same mistake again."
Henny Penny tells all about how she was fooled.
The giant from Jack and the Beanstalk tells his story.

These are only suggestions -- make up your own.

STORY STARTERS

Once upon a time there was an old house high upon a lonely hill. No one had lived in the house since the beginning of the century. Now a family was moving in . . .

"I know what I'll do," thought _____. "I can return this bracelet easily. Here is a name, and the address is only two blocks away." _____ set off at a rapid pace, scanning the buildings for numbers: 91 . . . 93 . . . 95 . . . Number 97 should be next and that was the address on the bracelet. But what was this? An empty lot?

It seemed like any other day when I woke up that morning but how could I know the events that were to take place. One thing followed another and before I knew it everything was a . . .

"If you push the black button, you'll go forward in time," explained Professor White as he showed Bill the control panel of the Time Craft. "If you push the red button, you'll go back in time. There is just one slight problem, Bill. When you decide to return to the present, you may be off by ten, twenty, or even fifty years one way or the other. Are you still sure you want to give my Time Craft a trial run?"

"You bet I do!" said Bill. He shook hands with Professor White and climbed into the strange looking machine . . .

Imagine you have just invented something that is very unusual. Make up an advertisement that will make people want to buy your invention. Your advertisement should include a brand name, slogan and sales message. Draw a picture of your invention.

Brand Name (your invention):_____

Slogan:_____

Sales Message: _____

One day while up in the attic I found an old trunk that I had never seen before. It was covered with dust and cobwebs and it had a very strong lock. After some time I finally got the lock off and when I lifted the lid was I surprised!

_____ examined the box. It was old, but still as sturdy as ever. The heavy wooden cover was held firmly in place by dull brass hinges. Tightly closed and locked, the box seemed impossible to open. What was in the strange box? How could it be opened with no key? Where was the key anyway? Suddenly, _____ saw a tiny bit of paper tucked behind one of the hinges . . .

I was a little late leaving school on Wednesday, and I was riding my bike down a dark, winding road. I suddenly saw bright lights coming down from the sky. It looked like a _____, but I couldn't believe my eyes. All at once . . .

TOPICS FOR CREATIVE WRITING

1. One day the sun never came out . . .
2. I never believed in magic until . . .
3. If you can keep a secret, I'll tell you about . . .
4. I rubbed my magic ring and . . .
5. The hardest decision I ever had to make was . . .
6. A "Gribble" is . . .
7. I never believed in reincarnation but . . .

TITLES FOR STARTERS: Try the following titles on a story board to get children started. Place the titles on strips of paper so you can keep changing some each day and use them more than once.

1. This Tape Will Self-destruct in 60 Minutes
2. My Square Bowling Ball
3. When I'm President
4. UGH!!
5. A Tense Moment

SOME IDEAS THAT MAY GET THEM GOING:

1. Write "tall" tales about people or happenings.
2. Concoct new animals by joining two others - elecamel, kangarabbit - and make up a story with the new animal as a hero or a villain.
3. Write a conversation between the shoes of a noted person.
4. Pretend a huge skeleton in the museum comes alive and tells an adventure out of its past.
5. Write a yarn for the Spinners Club. All members write a story and keep a notebook of stories.

Classmate's Biography

a) Put everyone's name in a hat (teacher included)
b) Each child picks a name
c) We make an outline together

I. Early Life
   A. Birth
   B. Family
   C. Friends
   D. Pets
   E. Earliest Memory

II. School Years
   A. Kindergarten
   B. Primary Grades
   C. Friends
   D. Hobbies
   E. Talents

d) Each Child must interview another and take notes according to the outline (gives them a good chance to get to know one another)
e) Putting notes into paragraphs
f. Make cover - illustrating part of person's life
g) Share these biographies

Future Newspaper

The year is 2037. We are designing a newspaper of the future. I listed all the sections of a newspaper and each youngster is signed up - they were very excited about this activity. I plan to display the articles and pictures in newspaper form on the bulletin board.

A STEP BY STEP MODEL WEEHAWKEN

I. Diagnosis

collect 3 short writing samples from each student
using the diagnostic grid, check off each student's needs by class
priority rank items checked

II. Prescription

select the teaching technique needed to strengthen students' writing
teach to the whole class
develop a check list for each skill taught
assign a short writing exercise utilizing the skill demonstrated

III. Evaluation

have students
read to entire class or
read to small group or
put up on overhead their writing samples

have students analyze each paper only for stated objectives
have students correct orally and write out possible corrections
have students edit and re-write their own papers
have students proofread each others' papers
make final corrections, if needed
collect all editions of the paper
grade final re-write against original version

CHAPPAQUA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Writing Skills Expectations

At the end of the kindergarten year, the average child should be able to:

1. Grasp pencil correctly.
2. Use correct posture when writing.
3. Speak in complete sentences.
4. Write name using lower case letters.
5. Recognize upper and lower case letters.
6. Understand concept of left to right progression.
7. Show an awareness for correct letter formation.
8. Dictate a story in sequence.

At the end of grade _____, the average paper has the following characteristics:

Grade 1

1. Correct formation of letters.
2. Handwriting adapted to paper size and guide lines.
3. Proper spacing of words.
4. Appropriate capitalization of names, I, and the beginning of sentences.
5. Expression of ideas in complete sentences.
6. Proper use of the period and the question mark.

Grade 2

1. Appropriate capitalization in a sentence.
2. Appropriate use of the period and question mark in a sentence.
3. Proper agreement of subject-verb in a sentence.
4. Use of complete sentences.
5. Appropriate spelling.
6. Development of ideas in a sequential order.
7. Correct formation of letters and spatial organization.
8. Evidence of proofreading.

Grade 3

1. Use of complete sentences beginning with a capital and ending with appropriate punctuation.
2. Proper use of capitalization.
3. Proper use of the English language appropriate to the grade level.
4. Arrangement of a logical sequence of thought -- sentence and paragraph unity (beginning, middle and end).
5. Demonstration of proofreading.

Grade 4

1. Appropriate capitalization and punctuation.
2. Descriptive words.
3. Agreement of subject and verb.
4. Variety in sentence beginnings.
5. Use of good paragraphs with topic sentences.
6. Evidence of information gathering skills and organized ideas.
7. Logical sequence of ideas.

Grade 5

1. Clearly defined topic sentence in each paragraph.
2. Complete sentences that stick to the topic.
3. Appropriate capitalization, punctuation and spelling.
4. Sentence variety.
5. Concluding sentences.

Grade 6

1. Sentences demonstrating knowledge of complete thought, e.g., no run-on or fragmented sentences.
2. Sentences varying in length, type, and structure (including use of compound sentences, modifying words and phrases).
3. Good paragraph development (effective opening and closing sentences, orderly development of the topic sentence, coherence, use of transitional element) to assure clarity.
4. Change of paragraph with each new topic, time, person, place.
5. Organization of multi-paragraph writing (essay, letter, summary, theme, narration, description, research paper) would have an introduction, body, conclusion.
6. Correct format (heading, title if pertinent, margins, legible writing).
7. Correct usage and elaboration of vocabulary.
8. Use of proofreading skills: spelling, grammar, mechanics as applicable to sixth grade.
9. Some evidence of increasing growth in original thought, critical thinking, or varying points of view.

HELPFUL TEACHER INTERVENTION DURING THE COMPOSING PROCESS

Denise L. David
Tonawanda Junior High School

What I will be describing is a writing plan that I use and that other teachers in my school use; it is workable both for students and teachers. It is a plan in which students write frequently, nearly every day, a plan in which they get lots of feedback; and a plan in which students write better than they used to when literature was the center of the curriculum and writing was only something that happened occasionally and then usually to fill a gap between two literature units.

To use this approach I needed to recognize, as theorists had been suggesting and as I had learned from examining my own writing style, that writing is a process. Writing does not exist pre-written, pre-organized, and pre-edited somewhere in our brains waiting only for the correct neural impulse to fetch it from some mental filing cabinet. Writing is a creative process; perhaps like a sculptor molding a mass of clay, we need to push and stretch and shape that mass we call experience, memory, and intellect into a written creation--a communication. This act of creation, be it a letter of complaint about an unfair bill or an explanation of nuclear fission, is set into motion as soon as we begin to consider putting these thoughts to paper.

When we accept this about writing, we also need to accept that our role as teachers of writing will change. The student who hands in even a badly written paper has already gone through a number of stages in the writing process. Our efforts to "correct" these papers even at this stage may be rather like a carpenter who in trying to teach an apprentice to build a house lets his or her apprentice build the entire structure first and then criticizes the final structure explaining that the wood used was still green, that the foundation will never support the house and that the pink paint will not be appropriate for the buyer. That apprentice may come away with a sense of failure and inadequacy, which probably is not inappropriate if one simply looks at the final structure. But helpful intervention by a skilled carpenter early in the process, during the selection of wood and the laying of the foundation may have increased the odds of the house turning out better. There is a process to be learned; it is not enough to show a model of a well built house and instruct the apprentice to build one like it.

While this may be a simple-minded analogy, the point is that we as teachers of writing need to help inexperienced writers work through the stages of the writing process: from pre-writing; that is, getting ideas, developing a question, finding something to say; to writing, getting thoughts on paper in some form; to revising, making the paper acceptable for an audience, rearranging thoughts, changing sentences or changing spelling and punctuation. This may mean that far more than one day a week can be spent on a writing assignment; there may easily need to be a day for pre-writing activities, another for peer responses and possibly another to read revised drafts aloud in small groups.

Teacher intervention at crucial points means that we exchange our roles as editors to every student for a role closer to that of director or coach. Our main responsibilities change to (1) providing time for students to write, (2) carefully planning tasks that will help the students' writing skills develop in ways that Moffett, Cooper and others suggest as optimal for good writers, (3) providing immediate and appropriate response to students' writing from a variety of readers including ourselves and other students as well as a more public response that class or school publications can provide.

In the writing program at Tonawanda, we have changed our teaching practice to reflect the implications of this new teacher role. We articulated the following teaching principles in a summer workshop with Charles Cooper (English Journal, November 1976). They have served as a reminder to us of the kind of writing program to which we are philosophically committed.

(1) We need to provide many opportunities for students to write and within these many writing experiences there ought to be a variety of writing demands. The students need to develop skills in such diverse writing tasks as drama, narration, exposition, and persuasion. Within these types, there should be shifts in the rhetorical relationship between voice-audience-purpose. In our program this principle has resulted in three simultaneous writing strands. The first of these is a private journal in which the students write during at least ten minutes of class time twice a week. The emphasis here is on quantity. The student needs to see himself as a writer who can transform a blank page with his words.

The second strand centers around poetry of the sort that Kenneth Koch suggests in Wishes, Lies, and Dreams. It relies heavily on the students' own creativity and vision. It is accessible to even the student with severe writing difficulties. Often, the stumbling blocks of prose diminish in poetry. All writers need to taste success.

The third strand consists of structured tasks that take students through the progression of development that theorists such as James Moffett have so long suggested. Tasks begin close in time and space gradually moving away from the student, himself, and his direct experience; moving from the concrete to the abstract.

(2) In a middle school or junior high, writing tasks ought to tap the students' own experience and gradually increase the distance between the writer and the audience as well as the distance between the writer and the subject. The task that I will ask you to write will be an example of how this theory can be translated into a classroom assignment.

(3) Writing is process. Teaching plans need to take pre-writing, drafting, and revising stages into consideration. We, as teachers, can no longer spend the bulk of our time concentrating only on the final product.

(4) The teacher has a responsibility for careful response. This can be in the form of the teacher demonstrating response to an actual student piece using an overhead projector or it can be in the form of well-trained and well-directed small groups responding to each other's writing. The teacher can arrange for conferences with students. As the teacher involves the student-writers in this task of responding to writing, there will be at least two obvious benefits. First, students are all getting more feedback to their writing and probably getting it faster than if the teacher alone were responsible for all response. Second, by putting themselves in the role of reader/responder students are learning that writing exists in a real world; most writing is written to be read by more than just a teacher. Students will start to learn some useful things about audience. Writing seems to be a process where we are constantly shifting back and forth from writer to reader. "Is this clear?" "Will it be understood?" are questions writers must constantly consider. It is crucial that students learn to sense this shift back and forth from producer of language to interpreter of language.

(5) Evaluation of writing should reflect the assumptions we have about the way writing is taught. It is not appropriate to test writing ability with multiple choice usage tests.

(6) Expectation must remain high for all students. Students will not perform equally well under all circumstances. Some students will have severe handicaps such as inconsistent spelling or faulty grammar or non-standard usage, but in spite of these we must give these students ample practice writing. One needs to practice writing to improve in writing.

(7) Small groups need to be trained to function effectively. This may take time, but it is a fundamental learning tool in the writing class.

(8) Students need to write in a variety of modes for a variety of audiences and purposes. It is also desirable to have students read and write in the same mode whenever possible.

Teachers of writing probably ought to write often themselves. At least sometimes, the teacher should write in response to the tasks that the students are asked to write. We all need to remain vulnerable and remember that no matter how practiced we are there is a challenge with each new, blank page. The terror is always possible until finally the piece begins to writhe and twist itself into being. It is good for us to renew this terror; it is important for us to remember that we are not safe and immune barricaded behind our desks with the name, "teacher." We, too, are seekers, learners. We have taken the journey to meaning through written words more often than most of our students and we have learned some valuable things about how to proceed, but each new journey presents new hazards. We are valuable guides, but we are not infallible dispensers of information about writing. With this in mind, I ask you to proceed through the following writing task as we might ask students to do.

Begin by drifting through your memory store for a few minutes. The things that we remember most vividly are those that had special import for us; they may have been events that were especially good or especially bad. Things that have embarrassed us have usually carved their own special mark on our memories, burning in a clear picture. Now, in retrospect what was once painfully embarrassing may seem almost funny. But at the time the incidents occurred they seared themselves into our consciousness, so that we can remember minute details about the circumstances surrounding each incident. List at least three incidents that you remember almost as if you were in that setting again. For this task, try to sort through your experiences for three incidents that were memorable because of your embarrassment. Jot down on your paper just a note to yourself reminding you of the three incidents. Your note might read something like, "The time I had toilet paper stuck to my shoe," or "The time I was too honest."

After you have at least three incidents, select one of the three for a more thorough recall. Try to transport yourself to that time, that place, that moment in your life. Begin by listing as many specific details as you can about that specific time. Do not censor yourself. Free associate any details that come to mind. Quantity and specificity are the keys here. Force yourself to list as many things as you can in ten or fifteen minutes. Rely on all of your senses for information. Were there sounds, background noises, music, a special song popular then that you can associate with the incident? As nearly as you can, put yourself back in that time again and see, hear, feel, smell, taste the things that you experienced then.

After you have done this for at least ten or fifteen minutes, begin to write. You may refer to your list or not. Write the incident for a sympathetic reader using the casual, informal tone you might use with a friend.

This task could then be responded to in pairs or groups given very clear, limited, and specific directions as to how to respond. The next variation on the assignment forces the writer to view the incident a little differently. You are to now select someone other than yourself who participated in the incident. It could be someone highly involved or it could be someone who is nearly a stranger but who would have been in a position to view what happened. You are to retell the incident as if you were this other person. Alter both your language and content to reflect choices appropriate to the new teller's point of view.

This variation in the assignment allows students to gain insights about a crucial factor in writing--making choices. It also allows the writer to decenter a bit; that is, to move away from his own unique world view and begin to experience someone else's.

The third phase of the assignment helps students to explore a new mode. What has begun as an autobiographical incident now moves to an anonymous narration. You are to tell the same incident without being any of the characters. You are a narrator who is not a participant in the action. You may select any information from either of the first two tellings. You are to tell the story as if it is happening to someone else. You do have the knowledge of the character's thoughts and perceptions, but the story is to be told using the third person. The characters only speak for themselves when they are quoted. The main responsibility for telling what happens is in the hands of the anonymous narrator.

This sequencing of assignments moves the young, middle school writer from something very close in time and space, close to his own knowledge and experience, to something gradually more distant and difficult to write. The three pieces provide ample material for discussions in small groups of similarities and differences across the three pieces of writing. This kind of sequencing is also particularly rich in examples of the subtle changes that alteration of form can have on the language, organization, and content in written pieces. This assignment is but one example of how tasks can be designed to follow a meaningful sequence and serve as more than isolated activities to fill in time between literature units.

The teacher who intervenes in useful ways will provide an English class where both teacher and students move toward a more thorough understanding of the writing process.

Resource Bibliography

Denise L. David
Tonawanda Junior High

Book, Cassandra, and Kathleen Galvin. Instruction in and About Small Group Discussion. N.C.T.E., 1975.

Britton, David D., Robert C. Hawley, and Sidney B. Simon. Composition for Personal Growth. New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1973.

Elbow, Peter. Writing Without Teachers. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Gibson, Walker. Persona. New York: Random House, 1969.

Hawley, Robet C. Value Exploration Through Role Playing. New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1975.

111

Hollander, Sandra, and Saville Sax. Reality Games. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Hurwitz, Abraham B., and Arthur Goddard. Language Arts Games. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1972.

Koch, Kenneth. Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children to Write Poetry. New York: Random House, 1970.

_____ Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? New York: Random House, 1973.

Macrorie, Ken. Telling Writing. Rochelle Park, New Jersey: Hayden, 1970.

Moffett, James. A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13: A Handbook for Teachers. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1968.

_____ Teaching the Universe of Discourse. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1968.

Murray, Donald. A Writer Teaches Writing: A Practical Method of Teaching Composition. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1968.

Purves, Alan. How Porcupines Make Love. Lexington, Massachusetts: Xerox College Publishers, 1973.

Simon, Sidney B. Values Clarification. New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1972.

Stanford, Gene, and Barbara Dodds Stanford. Learning Discussion Skills Through Games. New York: Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1972.

The Writing Processes of Students. Buffalo, New York: Department of Elementary and Remedial Education, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1975.

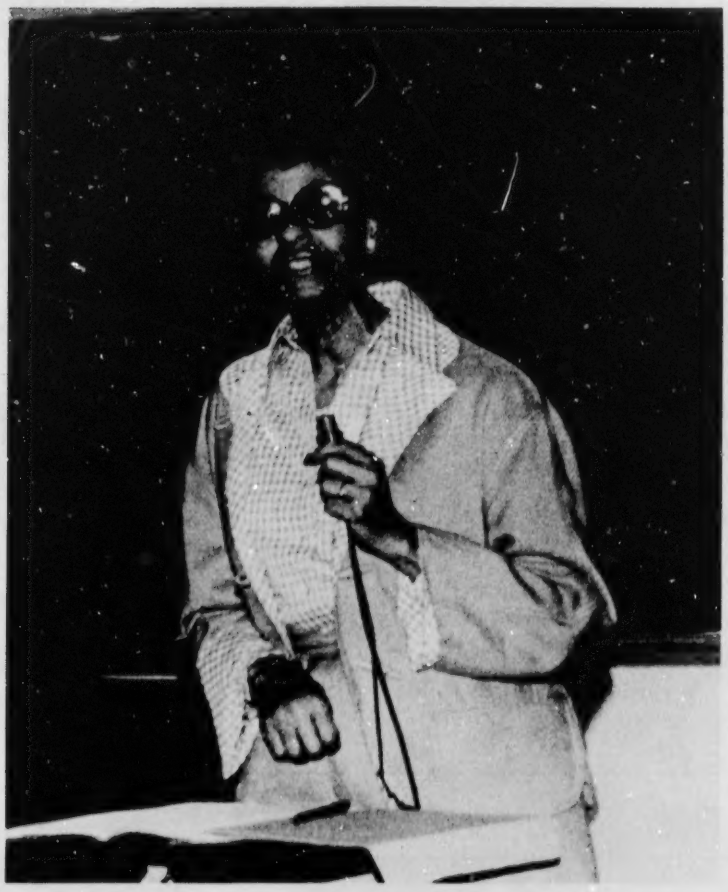
Cooper, Charles R. "Grades and Growth in Writing Programs." English Record, (Spring, 1975), 55-66.

_____ "Measuring Growth in Writing," English Journal. (March, 1975).

_____ "Students Learn to Read Fiction by Writing It: Average Kids Use New Point-of View Approach." California English Journal, 9 (April, 1973), 7-17.

_____ et al. "Tonawanda Middle School's New Writing Program." English Journal. (Nov. 1976).

Odell, Lee. "You Mean Write it Over in Ink?" English Journal, (December, 1975).



Ouida Clapp

President, New York State English Council

Competency Testing Controversies

Robert Squires
Vice-President
National Council of Teachers of English
Oneonta High School

The title of this session, "Basic Competency Test Controversies," is somewhat misleading. I was invited to present the National Council of Teachers of English position on basic competency testing. However, I find that in order to do that, I will have to discuss some of the controversies that have been and are raging.

The National Council of Teachers of English speaks through many voices, primarily through its presidents and executive directors, but also through its various commissions and committees. However, NCTE's "official" positions come only from resolutions passed by the members attending the annual business meeting. The 1977 annual business meeting in New York City was particularly productive on the subject of basic competency testing; of the seven resolutions passed at the meeting, four dealt directly with the subject. So as not to misrepresent those official positions of the council, I am going to quote them. The first supports HEW Secretary Califano:

> RESOLVED, that NCTE commend HEW Secretary Joseph A. Califano, Jr., for not committing resources from HEW to develop federally-financed national tests of minimum competencies, for being mindful of the deficiencies of current testing programs, and for requesting that the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Education, and the National Institute of Education undertake careful studies of the construction, the use, and the abuse of standardized achievement tests now being used in the nation's schools; RESOLVED that NCTE offer to Secretary Califano its resources and those of its affiliates in these studies.

The second resolution is also a commendation of federal action:

> RESOLVED that the National Council of Teachers of English commend the National Institute of Education for its initiative in expanding the Federal role in research on testing; RESOLVED that NCTE urge the NIE to limit its support to research on testing, research on student achievement, and a national effort to disseminate information about tests and test results to schools and parents; RESOLVED that NCTE offer to Patricia Graham, Director of the NIE, and Michael Timpane, Associate Director, its resources and those of its affiliates.

The third resolution is more aggressive in its opposition to basic competency testing because of its damaging effects on students and on integrated language arts curricula:

> RESOLVED that NCTE condemn the transformation of the English language arts curriculum from a holistic concern for language development to sequenced but isolated and often unrelated sets of reading and writing skills; RESOLVED that NCTE oppose as educationally unsound the use of mandated performance assessments as criteria for promotion and/or graduation of students; RESOLVED that NCTE oppose the use of narrow assessments of student skill as criteria for the hiring and firing of teachers; RESOLVED that NCTE actively campaign against testing practices and programs which, masquerading as improved education for all

children, actually result in the segregation and tracking of students, thus denying them equal educational opportunity.

The fourth resolution, which is only slightly less militant, calls for the development of alternative ways of assuring competence:

> RESOLVED that NCTE oppose legislatively mandated competency-based testing until such time as it is determined to be socially and educationally beneficial; RESOLVED that NCTE work with legislators and other policy makers to determine how language competence can be best assured; RESOLVED that appropriate NCTE standing committees and commissions examine alternative ways of assuring competence while determining through practice, theory and research if competency-based education is in the best interests of all members of the educational community.

Let me repeat for emphasis the first of those resolutions; "RESOLVED that NCTE oppose legislatively mandated competency-based testing until such time as it is determined to be socially and educationally beneficial." I do not believe that that time has come, and yet this week my school is administering the PCTs.

Certainly there has existed controversy over standardized tests ever since they were instituted. However, an exhaustive historical survey here is both difficult and unprofitable. We need to go back only to 1972 when the National Education Association's Task Force on Testing studied the use and effects of standardized tests. In its report, the task force noted that standardized tests tend to be unfair to minorities and lead to tracking systems in which students are denied mobility. The task force also noted that such tests are damaging to the self-concept of many students. Large numbers of students who perform poorly on standardized tests not only come to resent the educational system but also do not feel good about themselves. In its summary, the task force said:

> The major use of tests should be for the improvement of instruction -- for diagnosis of learning difficulties and for prescribing learning activities in response to learning needs. They must not be used in any way that will lead to labeling and classifying of students, for tracking into homogeneous groups as the major determinants to educational programs, to perpetuate an elitism, or to maintain some groups and individuals 'in their place' near the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. In short, tests must not be used in ways that will deny any student full access to equal educational opportunity.

The next important voice in the controversy, and one that dealt specifically with language arts, was NCTE's. In 1975, NCTE's Task Force on Measurement and Evaluation in the Study of English published its final report as a monograph entitled Common Sense and Testing in English. In that report, the task force presented a pie graph identifying some of the many facets of English (italics mine). Of the sixteen facets only six are partially covered by standardized English tests (italics again mine). The six are listening skill, study skills, reading skill, understanding of literature, grammar and language facts, and editing writing and spelling. The ten facets not covered are listening in various situations, development of values, reading interests, appreciation of literature, composing in writing, style and expression in writing, speaking skill, speaking effectiveness, and understanding and appreciation of media. The explanation of the pie graph says:

> English includes skills, information, attitudes, and feelings that people possess about language and about those who have used or now use language. English deals with varieties of written and oral language, as well as with the related nonverbal

modes of communication and expression, and with varieties of media. Finally, English deals with people's growth in language ability and growth through language to self-awareness and self-assurance.

Of all this variety, only a small part has been the focus of testing -- an even smaller part of the focus of 'standardized' testing. Even so, tests have a way of determining educational priorities, and the increased use of standardized tests has regrettably shrunk the list of priorities available for people to consider. Standardized tests have traditionally dealt with the more easily measurable aspects of English instruction, to the neglect of the full range of activities -- involving thoughts, feelings, and attitudes -- that are stressed by English teachers.

At present, standardized tests do not provide a valid or appropriate basis for many decisions. They cannot provide the necessary information to resolve such major issues as modification of the content of the English curriculum, changes in methods of teaching, and evaluation of the competence of teachers. It is doubtful whether they can ever do so, even assuming the possibility of great improvements in the tests themselves.

In the consclusion of the report, the task force said:

Although English teachers should accept those standardized tests that validly measure what they are teaching, they should insist that these tests cannot measure all aspects of students' wide range of experience in English, and they signally fail to measure many of those aspects deemed most important by teachers, parents, and employers.

Up to this point, I have dealt only with the controversy surrounding standardized tests. However, the controversy over minimal competency testing is a similar one. After all, both standardized tests and minimal competency tests purport to measure learned skills, and both categorize the test takers. In my opinion standardized tests are slightly less insidious because they do not necessarily doom students. The taker of a standardized test is a bit like a customer in an ice cream store who has a choice among several flavors. Of course, the last ten or twenty percent have to take vanilla because the store has run out of the more desirable flavors. However, the minimal competency test taker gets only one choice, and it's a very expensive one. The customer without enough funds may return when he or she has more money, but the price is likely to have gone up.

In December, 1976, NCTE's political action arm, SLATE (Support for Learning and Teaching of English) entered the minimal competency controversy with one of its position papers authored by Alan Purves, now NCTE president-elect. In reviewing the issues of minimal competency testing, Alan wrote:

The implications of this movement are not entirely clear, but certainly it raises a host of potential problems. These include:

1. The possibility that scores on competency tests will determine promotion or non-promotion and thus will lead to a return to grade-repeating, a practice which disappeared from American schools after research pointed to its ill-effects on students and on schools;

2. The possibility that there will emerge diplomas of different 'classes' dependent on the student's scores on a test, with attendant danger of social stigmatism;

3. The possibility that statements of competence will lead to a circumscribing of the curriculum to a point where it will be merely preparing students for the test rather than educating them broadly;

4. The possibility that statements of competence will lead to didactic teaching as a shortcut to improving student performance, when research has indicated that such teaching is not as beneficial as more varied approaches to teaching;

5. The possibility that educational resources will be concentrated upon those students who have trouble attaining the minimal level of competence, and will be diverted from the gifted and the broad range of students who can attain the minimal level fairly easily but need to go beyond it;

6. The possibility that educators and the public will be satisfied with bringing students to a minimal level of competency rather than to a level of mastery that is appropriate to their age, their view of themselves, and their aspirations;

7. The possibility that statements of competence and measures of competency will make schools less responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of this country.

The SLATE position paper concludes with "Guidelines for the Development of Competency Statements and Measures of Competence in English." In view of what has actually happened in New York and the rest of the nation since 1976, those guidelines deserve to be repeated here:

Competency Statements Must Be Sufficiently Comprehensive So as to Cover the Many Facets of English

1. Competency statements in English must include the broad areas of reading, writing, oral language, and media literacy.

2. Competency statements in English must include a variety of contexts (e.g., statement should not be limited to business communication).

3. Competency statements should emphasize those aspects of English which are critical in effective communication, as opposed to those which might be trivial or less significant (e.g., clarity of expression in a letter of application is more critical than using the appropriate state abbreviation in an address).

4. Competency statements in English must reflect the developmental level of the students (e.g., criteria for making inferences about reading must consider the potential ability of students at a given age to make inferences of a particular level of abstraction).

Measures of Competence in English Must Be Many and Varied

1. Measures of student competence in English must include not only tasks dealing with analysis but tasks calling for performance in oral and written language.

2. Measures of student competence in English must include tasks that are to be evaluated for their overall effectiveness by teachers or other professionals in English.

3. Measures of student competence in English should include language presented orally, in print, and through electronic media.

4. Measures of student competence in English must include tasks which are to be observed and evaluated by English teachers on a continuing basis (e.g., there should be some report on the student's use of language in daily situations as well as in specific test situations).

5. Measures of student competence in English must include provisions for superior performance (e.g., a measure of student performance in writing must include the possibility that a student could be judged an excellent writer so that incentives to excellence can remain in the curriculum and the testing process).

New York's PCTs follow those guidelines better than most I have seen, but they fall far short of the standards set by NCTE.

A second SLATE position paper on competency testing appeared in October, 1977, just a month before the adoption of the official NCTE policy. In that position paper, author Miles Myers of California isolated three critical issues. "One issue is whether a subject area will receive adequate institutional support if it is not a mandated area of competency." The second issue: "If states mandate too many areas of minimum competency, testing time may seriously interfere with instruction." And the third: "The forms of tests of minimum competency are a central concern. How an area is measured and assessed may seriously influence how an area is taught."

Among the more powerful unofficial voices with which NCTE speaks are those of its state and regional affiliates. One of those affiliates is, of course, NYSEC, the New York State English Council. The Fall 1978, issue of The English Record, NYSEC's journal, published a provocative article, actually a speech, by Rexford Brown of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Rex Brown's article, entitled "Minimal Competency Testing in the Language Arts: The Issues from a National Perspective," deserves to be quoted, not only because he speaks with an informed voice of reason, but also because he speaks with great wit. He said:

> Whatever their early, rash promises might have been, I think the 'scientific' educational technologists are more humble than their naive followers and will readily admit that our knowledge about the nature of learning is modest indeed. We do not have and never have had a sophisticated or scientific educational technology at our disposal.
>
> There is overwhelming evidence that even the best of multiple choice tests assess very few skills, knowledges and attitudes, and that their diagnostic utility is very low. To the extent that such tests identify general areas for remediation, I know of no evidence that they facilitate remediation or in any way make suddenly possible learning outcomes that have been impossible to achieve for fifty years.
>
> Finally, I cannot fathom the assumption that the schools are so isolated from the culture at large that they do not mirror both its strengths and its follies. The Dow Jones 'score' has lately been going down faster than any test score ever could; absenteeism at work, blue — and white — color crime and industrial violence dwarf whatever problems the schools may manifest. The institution of politics have not exactly covered itself with glory lately, either. A look around suffices to establish that a high school diploma is not the only thing that 'doesn't mean what it used to.'

In attacking the assumption that those who cannot pass a minimal competency test cannot survive, Brown says:

> Many supporters of minimal competency also believe that students who do not meet minimal standards will not 'SURVIVE.' In other words, failure on a minimal competency examination is tantamount to a sentence of death. How those few students who flunk such tests manage to be alive at all must puzzle the survival skills test makers. Theoretically, they are supposed to drop dead in their seats as soon as they miss the fifteenth item. Instead they not only make it out of the classroom, but have life enough left to hire a lawyer and sue hell out of the school! (Don't tell me they can't survive.)

In attacking the tests themselves, Brown echoes the report of the NCTE task force

> The language dealing with actual assessment of basic literacy often sounds like this: 'such learning objectives shall be measurable as to the actual student attainment . . .' Thus, the goals of basic education tend to become the measurable goals.

It seems to me that therein lies one of the greatest dangers in minimal competency testing. Basic competency tests are imposed from above and without by legislatures and noneducational pressure groups. But the agencies responsible for constructing the actual tests, the New York State Bureau of English for example, must write tests that cover the facets of the language arts curriculum that are measurable rather than those facets that the profession and the students believe to be desirable. In other words, I am fearful that in a few years, we in New York State will witness the development of curricula that concentrate on what everyone must achieve in order to graduate rather than on what everyone ought to achieve in order to be a responsible and productive citizen.

One more quotation from Rex Brown will, I think, suffice to support my and NCTE's position:

> Programs that define minimal competency in terms of survival skills or skills necessary to function adequately as a citizen, and so on . . . rest upon shaky philosophical grounds, because no one can prove any specific educational level is more related to survival than any other, or that education itself is a necessary condition for a satisfactory life. . . . Narrow tasks tend to imply that education exists only to prepare people for the world of work. Standards are very low; should teachers begin teaching to the test, educational quality would suffer greatly.

Although the official NCTE policy doesn't deal specifically with the problem, that last statement of Brown's hints at a problem I see when I look at my own students. I fear that minimal competency testing will create an educational system that penalizes students for what they don't know and can't seem to master instead of rewarding them for what they do know and have mastered. New York's education motto is "Let each become all that he is capable of being." In spite of the sexist wording, I would like to believe the motto still means something. But I'm afraid that the message our students are receiving is "Make sure each learns a little about reading, writing, and math, and nothing else really matters."

Like most of you, I suspect, I have several times in the past twenty years connived with my colleagues to give diplomas to students who, in our opinion, had become all they were capable of. I remember one student who probably couldn't have passed all of our competency tests, but who could do magic things with automobile engines. He now owns his own shop with five or six employees and a CPA to do his accounts. He was also smart enough to marry a

woman who does his correspondence for him. I believe his diploma helped to make him feel good about himself and to have a supportive attitude towards our educational system.

Another student who almost certainly could not have passed the competency test in writing is now head trainer in a junior college athletic department and holds the academic rank of instructor. Unlike the old system which allowed professional educators to look at students as individuals and reward those who had made the most of their educational opportunities, the minimal competency tests force us to deny diplomas to those students who have worked hard and achieved in areas other than reading, writing, and math. As long as our social system puts a premium on the high school diploma, basic competency tests will create a kind of social cul-de-sac with almost no room to turn around.

The most recent NCTE voice on the issue of minimal competency testing is that of Yetta Goodman, NCTE president for 1979. In her inaugural address at the Kansas City convention last November, she said:

> The Back to Basics forces want to control the learning and the thinking of young people through control of our teaching. If schools' total energies go into minimum competencies, then there is little need to worry about a growing body of informed, literate adults who question what they hear and what they read, who become actively involved in the major issues of a democracy.

Yetta went on to cite Earl Kelly's book In Defense of Youth. She noted that his central idea "is that the general public, including the professional education establishment, rejects the young." In his book, Kelly says, "Excessive testing is one of the most highly developed forms of rejection that has so far been invented." Yetta's theme for 1979 is "The International Year of the Child: Respect for the Learner." In setting that theme she said:

> We ought to be proud of where we are educationally as a nation. But there are many who insist that equal education means equal performance as measured by some standardized test. An early purpose of testing as Earl Kelly said was to screen out undesirables. Testing is even more of a rejection device than ever before. We now deprive young people of high school diplomas they have spent twelve years pursuing while being taught by professional educators. We will punish them for our shortcomings.

Although NCTE is opposed to minimal competency testing, it is only fair that I point out that it would be hypocritical of us to condemn completely New York's Regents Competency Test in Writing. It was NCTE that fought so long for the reinstatement of the writing sample on the College Boards Achievement Tests. NCTE maintains that a writing test should be writing, not editing. Therefore, as long as minimal competency tests are imposed on us from above, NCTE commends the form, three samples of writing, of the PCTs.

I must, of course, temper that faint praise by pointing out that both the reading test and the writing test conflict with another piece of NCTE policy. NCTE, particularly the Elementary Section Committee, has had for several years as a major thrust the promotion of integrated language arts curricula. The RCTs have the potential of promoting not only an emphasis on reading and writing at the expense of the other languages arts, but also the separation of those skills from the rest of the curriculum.

In a special issue of English News this Spring, the Bureau of English included a section entitled "Answers to Questions Frequently Asked about the Regents Competency Tests in Writing." Questions #4 on page 5 asks, "Will the RCT cover all the aspects and all the goals of a sound, comprehensive, K-12 English program?" The answer reads, "No. The RCT's pertain

only to writing skills and to certain modes of discourse." Although NCTE approves of actual writing for purposes of assessing writing skill, we disapprove of any practice that runs counter to an holistic, integrated curriculum.

Up to this point I have been presenting NCTE's case against minimal competency testing. The question I hope you are asking is, "What has NCTE done to take a positive step in combating minimal competency testing?" This Spring, just two months ago, NCTE and seven other subject matter associations released a document called "The Essentials of Education." The word "essentials" in the title is very important because the statement is the attempt by professional educators to establish criteria for judging all that is necessary, rather than what is merely basic, in education. One of the chief architects of the statement is Charlotte Brooks, a past president of NCTE. Besides NCTE the subscribers are the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association; the Speech Communication Association; the International Reading Association; the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages; and the National Science Teachers Association.

"The Essentials of Education" provides a definition of "those elements of education that are essential to a productive and a meaningful life." The statement says:

> In all subjects, students develop skills in using language and other symbol systems; they develop the ability to reason, and they undergo experiences that lead to emotional and social maturity. Students master these skills and abilities through observing, listening, talking, reading and writing about science, mathematics, music, history, the arts and other aspects of our intellectual and social heritage. As they learn about their world and its heritage they necessarily deepen their skills in language and reasoning and acquire the basis for emotional and social growth. Skills and abilities do not grow in isolation from content. This interdependence of skills and content is the central concept of "The Essentials of Education."
>
> The essentials of education include the ability to use language to think and to communicate; to use mathematical knowledge and methods to solve problems; to reason logically; to apply and to understand scientific knowledge and methods; to make use of technology and to understand its limitations; to express oneself through art, music, and literature and to understand the expression of others; to understand other languages and cultures; to understand spatial relationships; to apply knowledge about health, nutrition, physical care and occupations to the world beyond school; to acquire the capacity to meet unexpected challenges; to recognize and to use one's full learning potential, and to prepare to go on learning for a lifetime.
>
> The essentials of education can be defined as that set of experiences which enables learners to become aware of the world around them and to develop an understanding and appreciation of the interdependence of the many facets of that world.

Although I haven't quoted all of the statement, I have quoted so much because I want to show that minimal competency tests in New York and elsewhere do not and can not measure those skills and abilities that NCTE and other professional subject matter organizations consider essential in everyone's education.

One of the assumptions basic to all I have presented so far is that minimal competency testing will come to determine the curriculum. A recent article in The New York Times gives credence to my fear. The author, Edward B. Fiske, reports that New York State Education Commisssioner, Gordon M. Ambach, has indicated that:

> Local school districts will have to 'reallocate some of their existing resources toward the goals of the minimum competency.' In other words, schools will have to rethink their priorities and guarantee that students have the basic academic skills before they start putting funds into such things as advanced courses and extra-curricular programs.

In the same article, Fiske quotes Robert R. Spillane, Deputy Commissioner for Elementary, Secondary and Continuing Education. In arguing that remedial programs do not require the hiring of additional teachers, Spillane said, "We're saying, 'Drop what you are doing and focus on reading, writing and arithmetic."

When I was an undergraduate over twenty-five years ago, I first heard a story that has many versions. I think it is apropos here. In the forest there was a large number of animal children from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and with an equally wide range of talents, natural skills, and interests. Freddy Flying Squirrel, for instance, easily passed the basic competency testing in flying, but scored only fifteen on the test in swimming. As a result, Freddy was given a great deal of remedial work in swimming, and eventually, just before graduation, he passed with a sixty-five. In the meantime, of course, he had had no time to practice his flying, nor had he had time for enrichment courses like "Flying Squirrel Literature," "Tree House Management," and "Sunset Appreciation."

And so Freddy, having passed all of his basic competency tests and the required courses, received his diploma. But he still didn't like swimming, didn't do it very well, and certainly couldn't compete with his friend Oswald Otter. The other curious thing he discovered was that his skill in flying hadn't developed as it should have because he had devoted so little time and attention to it.

Some of Freddy's friends fared even worse. Oswald Otter never did pass the basic competency test in flying, and one day, after he got discouraged and quit school in the tenth grade, almost drowned when he was hunting with his father. Belinda Bat had to have several expensive eye operations and perform time-consuming and painful exercises to improve her ability to see in the daytime. After she finally graduated, having been held back a grade four different times, Belinda kept bumping into trees in the dark and was disowned by her family.

For me, a significant reason for opposing minimal competency testing is that there is no evidence that the tests accomplish what their advocates hope they will. In fact there is some evidence to suggest they do not. In New York we have not had them long enough to accumulate data, but in a New York Times article on March 19, 1979, Edward B. Fiske explored this issue. He wrote:

> The other conspicuous feature of existing minimum competency programs is the lack of any definitive data showing that they are improving student achievement.
>
> In Bakersfield (California), for example, students who had passed all the math tests in 1976 and 1977 were retested last year, and only one in 10 passed them all again. The average student passed 10 of the 15 tests.
>
> "The kids bone up and then forget," said Miss Wood (a mathematics teacher at Bakersfield High School). "The argument for keeping the tests is that at least they have learned it once, and perhaps it will come back when they need it."

An April 22, 1979, New York Times article also discussed the disappointing Bakersfield results, but gave more space to Gary, Indiana, which has recently instituted a competency

program, and to Denver, Colorado, which has had a program since 1962. About Gary, Indiana, the author, Robert A. Frahm, wrote:

> Gary school officials are fond of citing figures showing a 73 percent passing rate in 1977, compared with a 42 percent rate in 1971, for seniors taking the U.S. Steel Corporation's apprenticeship examination. But the passing rate was up to 65 percent in 1973, a year before Gary's competency program was proposed.

About Denver, Frahm wrote, "Nobody has answered this question: Does competency testing really help produce competent graduates?" And later in the article, he said:

> In Denver, some employers apparently pay little attention to competency tests, contending that graduates who apply for jobs often arrive with poor reading and math skills anyway.

Finally, to bring this session back to the point it began, NCTE's official position, I wish to cite the findings of a blue-ribbon, NCTE panel of English educators headed by Allan Dittmer of the University of Nebraska. Members of the panel wrote individual critiques of competency testing programs. Among the panel's findings:

1. Seymour Yesner, Minneapolis Public Schools, criticized a test that "over-emphasizes the forms of correctness" rather than the ability to communicate.

2. Thomas Gage, Humboldt State University, California, led other reviewers in a concern that narrow tests will result in narrow school programs. Miles Myers, University of California at Berkeley said, "It is difficult to imagine that such tests will not influence curriculum," and James Hoetker, Florida State University said language arts teachers might be "reduced in official terms, to remedial reading persons."

3. Hoetker also criticized competency tests that make "no mention at all of literature . . . No mention at all of student creative work in writing or drama. No mention at all of attitudes or appreciation."

The panelists concluded their rather pessimistic report by citing Brossel: "Periodic assessment is an integral part of any good educational program. But . . . increasing the amount of testing does not insure an increase in learning, as all good teachers know. Often it impedes learning, or worse, replaces it."

I want to conclude by mentioning very briefly NCTE's most recent work on "basic skills." Last fall when Congress expanded Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to include oral and written expression in addition to reading and mathematics, NCTE urged the U.S. Office of Education to define writing and speaking precisely in the regulations governing programs of basic skills instruction, and to explain what activities they encompass, in order to help state and local education agencies avoid applying for federal funds for trivial projects. At the request of the USOE, NCTE prepared a statement setting forth standards for basic skills writing programs. Incidentally, Lee Odell, this morning's keynote speaker, was one of the authors of the standards. The Speech Communication Association and the American Speech and Hearing Association have collaborated on a similar statement on standards for basic skills programs in oral expression.

I am not going to quote from the standards because to excerpt from the document would distort it. Secondly, it will very soon be widely published in all NCTE journals and as a separate paper. Thirdly, any district contemplating a grant application for a basic skills

program under Title II of the ESEA will automatically receive a copy from the USOE. I will, however, append the standards to this talk when the proceedings of this conference are published. I hasten to emphasize that NCTE's preparation of the standards document must not be construed as an endorsement of competency testing; it is specifically a guide for programs of instruction in basic skills in writing.

If I seem to have been contradicting myself this morning, it is simply that on the one hand NCTE idealistically opposes the philosophy of minimal competency testing, and on the other hand pragmatically is trying to make sure that existing tests and programs do as little damage as possible to students and to curricula.

WRITING TODAY AND TOMORROW

John C. Maxwell
Deputy Executive Director
National Council of Teachers of English

I want to thank Charles Chew and Sheila Schlawin for inviting me to speak at this closing session of the State Department Conference. I come to this conference from the Middle West, but I come to New York not as a stranger; for as truth would have it I was born in Brooklyn, New York more years ago than I care to remember. And I come not as a stranger to the perplexing matter of minimal competency testing.

I should state at the outset that the organization for which I work, the National Council of Teachers of English, is opposed to the current enthusiasm for competency testing in the states, especially with cheap, ill-designed, and potentially harmful varieties of minimal competency testing.

I'm usually called in about the issue of minimal competency testing in states such as North Dakota where there was and is no minimal competency bill or edict from the State Board of Education. And my usual responsibility is to rail and rant against the decision to introduce minimal competency testing. But today in New York State, minimal competency testing is fully positioned to run under the edict of the State Board of Regents. Accordingly my task is to find what optimism I can in your present situation.

For the past day or so I have had the rare opportunity to attend a conference. In my work for NCTE, while I may be present at conferences, I am usually too distracted by their mechanics to listen, to question, to listen again, to read eyes, to hear what's being said in bars and taxis and in the corridors of places such as this beautiful campus. I have talked with many of you, and the sounds I have heard are not happy sounds. You are concerned, especially those among you who are teachers of the English language arts who feel that something is threatened, is slipping away.

As I sat at my desk a while back to begin to bring my thoughts together in anticipation of this conference, I wrote down a line that read: "New York, like more than two thirds of the states, is caught up with the minimal competency testing juggernaut." Since my speech was some time away and I hadn't really gathered steam for a continuing flow of thought, I paused to look into my dictionary to trace the ancestry of that interesting word, juggernaut. To my surprise I found that it was a word of Asian Indian origin. Jagannath, in the Hindu religion, is the eighth reincarnation of Vishnu. In the city of Orissa, India, an idol of the deity is drawn along in a yearly pageant on a large and heavy cart; and at one time devotees were known to throw themselves under the wheels of the cart on which the idol of Jagannath reposed. It was thought to be an act of devotion to be crushed under those wheels, for Jagannath is known as lord of the world. Through time, the word juggernaut entered our language as a symbol for an unstoppable force.

The perception of a juggernaut as, particularly, a reincarnation started the metaphorical juices flowing. It was an easy leap to the perception that the juggernaut of minimal competency is but a reincarnation of the factory metaphor for schools, so much in vogue between 1915 and 1930 in theories of school administration and management. (This movement has been well described in Callahan's Education and the Cult of Efficiency.) Some believe that minimal competency testing may be nothing more than a reincarnation of the behavioral objectives movement of 10 years ago, against which most of us railed and which we labelled "misguided" at best.

For some, however, the coming of the minimal competency testing juggernaut has been a cause for enthusiasm and possibly devotion. Those who welcome the wagon bearing the juggernaut do so from many motives. They say, for example, "The schools must be made more efficient. Where is our money going?" Or another, "The kids are out of hand, into dope, sex, long hair, and other libidinous urges. What they need is a good dose of hard work and the world will become a better place." Or another and more serious proposition: "The children of the poor are not being educated well-enough to survive or, more important, to succeed in an increasingly technological society. Thorough grounding in basic skills will be their salvation." Or another proposition: "The high school diploma is meaningless, and standards for graduation must be set so that employers will know what they are getting for their educational dollar." And finally, secretly, "The public schools are Godless, and keeping the students busy with the basics will leave no time for relativism and values clarification." Perhaps I exaggerate some of these arguments, perhaps not; in any event, you have heard them before. Together, whether they are based on truth or pious hope, they constitute powerful arguments for doing something radically different, and that is what is happening today.

In Illinois, where I live and raise my sons, I serve on our local community's "Minimal Competency Task Force." During our debates, I have seen the dread attraction of easy solutions (and non-solutions) to complex educational and social problems.

That task force is only one of hundreds around the state assigned by the Illinois Office of Education to come to judgment by June 1980, so that the IOE can, in turn, advise the Illinois legislature on what to do, if anything, about minimal competency testing in our state. I think the Illinois approach is a healthy one, and I wish that your citizens had had this sort of opportunity.

As a result of debate, one of our first and firmest recommendations in Urbana will be that no student should be denied a diploma because of a test. We feel that this feature of the minimal competency testing movement is inequitable and unnecessary. We recognize of course that for those who want to make minimal competency testing systems work, the threat of nongraduation is a major cudgel to wave over the heads of young people. The Urbana conclusion has also been drawn in the states of Massachusetts and Nebraska, and I would recommend that in New York State there be a reconsideration of this aspect of the minimal competency testing program. It's palpably unfair to punish the victims.

I do wish that the Illinois legislature would wait until 1982 or 1983 so that we in Illinois will have the benefit of the New York State experience. I think that the projected program in New York has an enormous instructive potential for the rest of the country. There are many distinguishing and important characteristics of the experiment which you are about to launch:

1) New York State has had the benefit of the painful early experiences of Florida and other states.

2) New York's is a state program and does not involve, as in many of the other Northern states, the "California cop out" which leaves the matter to local tests and local standards. This centralization will permit reliable and useful evaluation of the minimal competency program, something which is not possible in states in which there is so much local variety. New York will either succeed or fail very publicly for all the rest of us to see.

3) It seems to me fortuitous that New York State has a strong English Bureau to bring to the minimal competency program the best professional thinking possible, within the constraints of this peculiar variety of curriculum reform. People like Charles

Chew and Sheila Schlawin have, I think, done all that can be done to make the New York English language testing program respectable.

4) New York has the considerable advantage of a sophisticated and relatively well funded State Department evaluation division with a capacity to develop reasonably valid and reliable evaluation instruments.

5) New York State has within its borders a wide range of professional talent which provides this project a high awareness of research about writing as well as informed professional experience.

6) The state contains the heart of America's media, and we can be sure that those media will be watching the New York State experiment for failure, fraud, and abuse as well as success, if success is to be had.

7) And most interesting of all, the New York State Regents competency tests are very difficult. They are not minimal in the ordinary sense. It follows from this that there is high probability of legal action in this state, and struggles in the courts will be long and bitter. There are at issue not only the due process rights of students but also very difficult questions about "dumping" the responsibilities for administration of the test and remediation of the students upon teachers of English Language Arts.

As I said before, all of these elements combined make the New York State experiment in minimal competency testing an extremely important event, one which warrants national attention.

I have to confess that I find both pleasure and pain in the competency movement as it occurs throughout the United States. Some of the pain I have already alluded to. The pleasure derives from knowing that the vital powers of the state have joined the bandwagon on which English teachers have been cavorting for a long long time. Our English language arts bandwagon is very much at the center of the educational festival, rumbling along on the road to literacy.

The name of our English language arts bandwagon is emblazoned in sparkling gems on the side. Its name is not "basics" or "minimal competency" or other nonsensical words. The name of our bandwagon is literacy. Today some forces in the society have said what we have done is not good enough, and what English language arts teacher would not agree that what we have done is not good enough? It really is not acceptable to have an alleged 30 million functional illiterates at loose in this society. Even if the number is half what the U.S. Office of Education has said, based on the Texas studies, the presence of even 15 million functional illiterates is a blot on the national record. I contend that though the millions of illiterates are not our responsibility alone, they must be in our minds, as well as in the minds of all our citizens.

It was awareness of this illiteracy which led the NCTE Executive Committee three weeks ago to send its encouragement to Senator George McGovern to persist in his effort to secure passage of legislation calling for the appointment of a Presidential Commission on Literacy. McGovern's proposed commission, among other things, would define what we mean by illiteracy; it would search out the causes of our national illiteracy; and it would then propose proper remedies for that problem. Though I doubt it, it is possible that the New York experiment with the Regents Competency Test maybe one of the important solutions. A solution must be found, and I am happy to say that the English language arts teachers of New York will be at the center of the search.

It is becoming commonplace in discussions of education that the cause--or partial cause--of our falling test scores, the complexity of our professional lives, our sense of frustration, and to some degree our financial plight in education, is that we have been asked and have taken it upon ourselves to educate to literacy through the high school years a larger proportion of the eligible youth than any nation in the world. Along with that commitment have come the problems of dealing with students who in most other countries would have dropped out or would have been pushed out. More and more we are dealing with distracted learners, with inattentive learners, with even antagonistic learners. To me, that commitment to universal education through the high school years has added luster to our profession.

The road to literacy is rough and it is getting rougher. As our bandwagon lurches along, it tosses off some of our party whose grip has weakened, whose resolve is not enough, or who have become tired. At the same time it does not help when other people who should know better are flailing away with whips and cudgels, saying we are lazy, we don't care, we are ignorant, and it's all our fault.

The good thing in all of our anxiety about literacy and such solutions as minimal competency testing is that there is a good possibility that our detractors will grow arm-weary and at least ask the proper question--"What can we do to help?"

What we have needed, and what we are now getting, is a crowd of potential well-wishers around our bandwagon. In the shouting and in the tumult, there is a growing force near us, beside us, urging us on, caring about us. And it's been a long time a-coming.

We are very much at the center of the celebration on the road to literacy. The left front wheel of our bandwagon is listening, the right front wheel is reading, the left rear wheel is speaking, and the right rear wheel would then be writing. The literacy bandwagon depends on all four wheels turning together. It is gratifying to know that the U.S. Congress has at last officially recognized the expressive skills--oral and written communications--as basic under Title II of the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Reading has been continued as a basic in the new act. Perhaps, someday the act will recognize listening as a basic, which we all know it to be.

Yes, the English language arts bandwagon continues to roll, and we should be glad it is drawing the crowds that it is. For soon--very soon, I think--the crowd will want the bandwagon to move faster. As we have said for more than twenty years, that will take more horses.

I know that it seems unrealistic to repeat what we have been saying for twenty years--that no English class where composition is taught should have more than 25 students and that no teacher of writing in secondary schools should have more than 100 students per day. I know that it seems futile to say that teaching writing is everybody's job--everybody in the school and everybody in the community. I know that the schools are running out of money, and there's ridicule to be suffered if we say we must have more writing teachers, we must have lay readers where they are applicable, we must have more and better inservice, education about the teaching of writing, and we must have writing labs where alternative approaches are used with that hard core of students who seem inured to the approaches characteristic of mass education. I know it seems foolish to say all these things but they must be said; for, collectively, they will add up to improvement.

The National Council of Teachers of English has recently said all these things and more in a new statement on standards for basic skills writing programs, and members of the New York State English Council helped in formulating that statement. It seems to me that everyone in this room should be a card-carrying member of the New York State English Council, the Buffalo

Area Council of Teachers of English, the Long Island Teachers of English and the New York City Association of Teachers of English. It is these organizations which can carry these ideas wherever they should be carried, which can keep on saying what is needed in New York State and saying to those in authority that all of these improvements in teaching conditions which are necessary to improvement of literacy are going to cost and will require a reorientation of priorities in elementary and secondary schools.

As I said before, it is now too late to inveigh against the minimal competency testing juggernaut in New York State. The juggernaut, too, is in the literacy parade. It is a new model complete with chromed bumpers and plastic insides. It is like all new models, loaded with bugs and it may collapse at any point--if it doesn't run out of gas. But up ahead is the English language arts bandwagon, groaning and creaking but moving ahead. It is tested by time and its cargo and its driving force is a multitude of practitioners who value its purposes, who tinker to improve its works, and who are dedicated to its continuing success.

The mechanisms of the new competency machine may show us a thing or two. Experimental models often do. And if the new machine helps, so much the better. But let us not forget the essential difference between the two vehicles. The English language arts bandwagon is built of tempered steel, seasoned oak and solid brass. It speaks of complete literacy--literacy in the arts and humanities, literacy in drama and literature and the literacy that informs the heart and soul. Literacy worthy of human beings.

In the coming crisis--and a crisis seems inevitable--let us not lose sight of who we are and the splendid vehicle we have forged. Work for the English language arts bandwagon, strengthen it, support those who keep it running, and continue to exert your own strength to its well-being and development. The minimal competency juggernaut will be around for awhile, another in a long series of glittering innovations. And the juggernaut may serve us well by bringing to public attention what the English language arts bandwagon needs and has ever needed--the whole-hearted support of everyone in this society. If it takes a crisis to bring on the happy day, then let the crisis come. Our bandwagon will be the stronger for it.

Thank you for this opportunity to address you during the closing minutes of your conference. I wish you well on the journey home and in the days ahead.